

HISTORY IN MY TIME

By the same author

HITLER AND I
GERMANY TOMORROW

HISTORY IN MY TIME

by

OTTO STRASSER



Translated from the German by

DOUGLAS REED

JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED, MAY, 1941
SECOND IMPRESSION, JULY, 1941

JONATHAN CAPE LTD. 30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON
AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CITY OF OXFORD
AT THE ALDEN PRESS
PAPER BY SPALDING & HODGE LTD.
BOUND BY A. W. BAYN & CO. LTD.

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 1940 I wrote a book (*Nemesis?*) about a man then unknown to most British readers, Otto Strasser; I thought, and think, that he might emerge as an important figure in the German political scene after this war, and that the story of his life and his political ideas ought therefore to be as widely known in this country as I could make them.

After my book appeared, two of Strasser's own books were translated: *Hitler and I*, in which he told the story of his own encounters with Hitler, before he broke with that man, and *Germany Tomorrow*, in which he explained in detail his proposals for that Germany of a patriotic Socialism which he strives for.

That Germany, as I had already shown, is in his conception quite different from either a Socialist Germany, in the Marxist and internationalist sense, or a Hitlerist Germany, in the National Socialist and narrowly nationalist sense.

Strasser saw clearly that the international doctrine, according to Marx or according to Moscow, was repugnant to patriots and impracticable in our present world and particularly open to misuse by interested parties seeking to promote their own selfish ends behind the placard, 'Working-classes of all countries, unite!' He broke with the German Socialists for that and other reasons. He saw just as clearly that the nationalist doctrine according to Hitler (miscalled National *Socialism*) was nothing but the oldest foe of mankind, aggressive militarism and war, in a new kind of ~~sheep's~~ ^{tiger's} clothing, and he broke with Hitler, too, because of this.

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He desired a German Socialism on a patriotic basis, a levelling-up of the classes rather than a levelling-down, and above all the curbing of the political power of the small, but mighty possessing class in Germany, that of the great industrialists and great landlords, which had repeatedly led Germany into war, first through the Kaiser and then through Hitler.

He believes that there is in Germany a mighty urge towards a social revolution which has been twice thwarted through the diversion of that pent-up energy towards the outlet of international war — the first time by the Emperor in 1914, the second time by the Dictator in 1939 (or, better said, in 1933). He believes that after or during this war that persistently thwarted impulse will appear again and must be fulfilled.

So much for Otto Strasser, his ideas and his ideals. The story was told in my book and in his two books.

Now comes the sequel. I mentioned in *Nemesis?* that Strasser, a man of extraordinary energy and the only one among the emigrants from Hitler's Germany to carry on, in spite of stupendous difficulties, a real, active war against Hitler, at the constant risk of his own life, had written many books. Of these, the one which most impressed me in literary quality was his *Erlebte Weltgeschichte*, a most vivid and informative panorama of the amazing twenty years that began with the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo in 1914 (how deafeningly the detonation of that shot reverberated through the world then and how puny a report its faint echo seems to-day) to the final triumph of Hitler and the men-whose-tool-he-is in 1934. This is the present book, which now appears in English as *History In My Time*.

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But just as it goes to press new material has come to hand which lends it, and its author, new interest.

I told in *Nemesis* the absorbing story of his fight against Hitler and of his repeated escapes from the clutches of the men sent out by Hitler's Gestapo to kill him. He eluded them, after hair-raising adventures, in Germany, when Hitler came to power. He went to Austria, and by another near-miracle escaped them there, where the Vienna Police Chief, already privily pledged to Hitler, sought to catch him. He went to Czechoslovakia and several times slipped through their hands, though once they trapped and killed his chief lieutenant. By that time quite alone, he escaped to Switzerland, where he was when an attempt on Hitler's life, by a bomb, was said to have been made in Munich in November 1939, after the present war had begun. The Nazis immediately accused him (and agents of the British Secret Service!) of it and at the last moment Otto Strasser, who had long been refused admission to France, where there were enough other friends of Hitler, as we now know, was enabled to slip into France; the Swiss Government might have been hard put to it, at that time, to resist a demand for his surrender.

Thus Otto Strasser was in Paris when I sought him out, at the beginning of 1940, to write my book about him. In that book I said that his many hair's-breadth escapes from his pursuers caused me to think that the future must hold something in store for him. Why should Destiny have snatched him so often from the grasp of his pursuers, if it had not some part for him to play?

Not many weeks after I saw him the Germans were in Paris. For weeks and months after that nothing was heard of him, save that the Germans reported him to have been

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captured in Paris, which meant that he would have been killed.

Once more, he escaped. He is now on the other side of the Atlantic. Just as this book goes to press the story of the first part of his adventures — the escape from France itself — has come to hand. Together with the tale of his earlier deliverances, ranging over six years, which I told in *Nemesis*?, it makes a truly fantastic story, unequalled in fiction.

I print it here, as an unexpected and most topical curtain-raiser to his book, *History In My Time*, which gives so vivid an insight into the tormented mind and harassed earthly journey of a man of that generation which was cradled about the turn of the century and is seemingly never to find rest. In this case, the man is a German; but many Englishmen have experienced a similar spiritual Calvary and similar physical stress and strife.

DOUGLAS REED

HISTORY IN MY TIME

MY ESCAPE FROM FRANCE

ON Saturday, June 8th, 1940, I received a telephone message from the office of Paul Reynaud, the French Prime Minister, War Minister and Foreign Minister, telling me to call in the course of the morning.

An hour later I was at the War Ministry, just as General Weygand ran up the broad stairway, two steps at a time. Smiling and full of confidence, the new French commander-in-chief returned my respectful salute, and I thought, like all the others present, 'The commander-in-chief can only look as cheerful as that if everything is going well'. (Indeed, the latest Army communiqués had sounded most optimistic.)

My appointment fell through because of General Weygand's visit; it was postponed until Monday, June 10th, 1940, at 11 o'clock in the morning. Nevertheless, I was able briefly to obtain from one of M. Reynaud's secretaries the assurance that all the misgivings had now been overcome which until then had hindered the beginning of the propaganda campaign for which I had put forward proposals; in the conference appointed for Monday the details of the actual beginning of this work were to be discussed.

Taking as my starting-point the fact — which was only belatedly understood, or not understood at all, in the democracies — that the successes of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini were due first and foremost to the collaboration of large groups of people inside the walls of the countries attacked, I had argued that this war was not a war of peoples but a war of views, and could only be prosecuted and won as such.

The Finn Kuosinen, the Frenchman Thorez, the

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Norwegian Quisling, the Hollander Mussert, the Belgian Degrelle, the Swiss Fonjallaz, the Rumanian Codreanu — none of these were 'traitors', paid agents of foreign powers, any more than the Frenchman de Gaulle, the Belgian Spaak or I myself! They were convinced supporters of the counter-idea, the victory of which they held to be desirable for their fatherland and their people. In the religious wars of the Middle Ages the dividing line, 'Catholic or Protestant', cut clean through all nations, all classes, and all families, and so, today, does the dividing line, 'All-powerful State or individual liberty', cut clean through nations, classes and families.

For white mankind is confronted once again by the question whether it shall arrange its economic, social and cultural order according to the principle of rule-from-above or of responsibility shared. And in view of the paramount importance of this spiritual cleavage, divisions according to race or blood-groups become insignificant — which is at once a complete refutation of the racial doctrine so fervently preached by Hitler himself.

Only the man who comprehends this basic aspect of the present war, to which are joined, of course, many political, geographical, historical, and economic aspects, will be able to understand the war itself, and therewith to place himself in possession of one of the most powerful weapons to win it for the Freedom Front.

For if the Party of the Totalitarian, the all-powerful State, has its friends in the countries of the West, the Party of Freedom has millions of supporters in the countries of Central Europe, in Germany and Italy. For years and years they have carried on the struggle against the tyrants of power quite alone, while the deluded leaders of the West thought

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to maintain 'friendly relations' with these blood-stained tyrants.

Or they thought that, at least, until bloody oppression in Germany was followed by bloody oppression abroad — the march on Vienna, the annexation of the Sudetenland, the violation of Prague, the destruction of Warsaw, the onslaught on Copenhagen, the occupation of Oslo, the burning of Amsterdam, the submission of Brussels. But even then the rulers in Paris did not see the stupendous possibilities of collaboration with the inner-German Freedom Front. Chauvinist politicians, short-sighted generals, treacherous Members of Parliament staged the tragi-comedy of the agitation against the 'Emigrants', imprisoned the convinced enemies of Hitler and unpolitical Jews, together with Hitler's own Germans, in concentration camps, and celebrated this miserable farce as 'a victory over the Fifth Column'.

I shall never forget the proof of illimitable stupidity — or treason — which my own internment in the Buffalo Concentration Camp gave. I, who for more than ten years had been Hitler's Enemy Number One, who for seven years had been hunted from land to land by Himmler's Gestapo and Ribbentrop's foreign agents, I was interned as a suspect candidate for the Fifth Column in this Buffalo Concentration Camp by the French Government on May 14th, 1940, Whit Tuesday. These fools had not realized, and probably have not yet realized, that the 'Fifth Column' was crouching in their own ranks, led by the trinity Laval, Flandin and Bonnet, just as Belgium's Fifth Column was led by Belgium's own king.

These things must be understood if the 'riddle' of the French collapse is to be understood. The very members of

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the French Government were the men who wished to prevent all propagandist activity against Hitler. It was the Daladier Government, or its Foreign Minister Bonnet, which as long before as December 8th, 1938, when I was in Paris, had me arrested there on the occasion of Ribbentrop's visit, because he had been asked for this 'small favour' by Herr Otto Abetz, who is today Hitler's plenipotentiary in France. The same Government of Daladier and Bonnet, at the outbreak of war, confiscated my second secret radio transmitter, which I had brought with me from Czechoslovakia to France, after overcoming great difficulties; (the first, as was told in Douglas Reed's *Nemesis?*, was destroyed by the Gestapo, when they murdered my friend Formis). Not only was this valuable piece of apparatus, which was worth more than £400, taken from me without any compensation, but all radio propaganda was expressly forbidden me.

These were the facts which led me to answer a question from the clever and energetic Minister Mandel (who, like Reynaud, saw the deterioration in France and was resolved to combat it), the question whether Hitler would attack in the west and with what prospects, with these words: 'He will attack, because his domestic situation compels him to attack. The result will depend on the inner strength of France.'

Only months after that, when the collapse of the French northern front had exposed the incompetency and treachery of many generals and prefects, did the startled country clamour for men of clean character and resolute will: Reynaud and Mandel. But every political observer in Paris knew that the Laval-Flandin-Bonnet group, with which at this time the former Prime Minister Daladier was in touch, was preparing to overthrow the Reynaud-Mandel Government as quickly as possible. In this they were able

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to count not only on many deluded Deputies of the Left, but also more and more on that whole fellow-feeling between Parliament, Administration and Army which had been shocked by the ignominious dismissal of so many generals and prefects, and also on the powerful group of great industrialists, who for long had advocated a compromise between Hitler and French Fascism.

But this point had not yet been reached! The 'Government of National Defence' still stood and seemed at last ready — or so the well-informed secretary of Paul Reynaud assured me on that morning of June 8th — to carry out my proposals for a campaign in Germany to animate the inner-German Freedom Front.

Sunday, June 9th, brought a cold douche for my reborn hope and enthusiasm. True, the official radio announcements were by no means unfavourable, but my Czech friends,¹ with whom I shared the midday meal, told me that they had orders to leave Paris that same afternoon. That seemed to me quite improbable, after the solemn declarations which the Government and the High Command had made. But a visit to the Czech headquarters at 50, Avenue Bourdonnais, showed me that the news was true. Punctually at four o'clock their column of lorries left Paris for Baz-sur-Mer, a little coastal resort north of Nantes. For a moment I hesitated whether I should accept their friendly invitation to accompany them, but the thought of the meeting which had been arranged for the next morning, Monday, dissuaded me (I should have been spared much if I had gone with them).

A strange atmosphere received me when the next morn-

¹ Strasser evidently means the Czech troops, whose headquarters was then in Paris.

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ing, Monday, June 10th, I set out from my hotel. At its door the proprietor, weeping, stopped me and said: 'You must leave to-day, Herr Strasser, I am closing the hotel. My wife and I are leaving Paris.' In the street not a taxicab was to be seen, but there were endless columns of vehicles of every other kind — handcarts, heavily-laden horse-drawn wagons, luxurious limousines, all full of human beings, luggage, bedsteads, baskets of washing, packages of food. It was a gigantic flight of the people of Paris to the country, to the south, to safety.

Even more alarming were the rumours about the advance of the Germans to the Seine, about an Italian declaration of war, about the treason of senior generals, about the overthrow of the Government, about parachutists. It was as if great clouds of stormy petrels were over Paris, portending the coming sirocco.

I still refused to allow myself to be carried away by this tidal wave of pessimism, and still less to be submerged by it. But the walk to the Ministry of War showed me that the authorities, too, were resolved to fly from Paris. The green army lorries stood in long rows in the Government quarter and were being feverishly laden with documents, typewriters and — I wonder why? — tables and chairs from the various ministries.

The Ministry of War offered the same picture. Strangely, I saw General Weygand there again, who went up the stairs through a silently waiting throng of officials, officers and police. Today he went slowly, and tapped his riding-switch against his high boots. The Press Conference had just finished, the last in Paris; I exchanged a few words with an old acquaintance (Burr, of the Associated Press), and sent in my name to Reynauld's chef-de-cabinet.

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'What?' he greeted me, 'are you still in Paris?'

'Of course,' I said, 'I am at last to have a definite answer today'.

'Too late, mon cher, all too late,' he said, 'save yourself. Leave Paris at once. We are going south in half an hour.'

Easier said than done! Neither I nor my secretary had even a safe conduct, without which a departure from Paris was in theory impossible from the start, and this quite apart from the enormous practical difficulties. But this trustworthy and friendly man was able to help me. In a few minutes I had papers for the two of us — a special safe conduct, an exit-permit for England, and a pass for all war-zones. We shook hands — and my sojourn in Paris was officially at an end.

But only in theory! For I was still in Paris, without a motor car, without a railway ticket, and without sufficient money. The last seemed to me the most important. I therefore charged my secretary to obtain, by hook or by crook, some kind of railway ticket, for a south-western or southern or, if none other was to be had, a south-eastern destination, and then I went in search of money. I had little success, at first. My bank account was still officially impounded (in connection with my earlier arrest and internment on May 14th). My publisher, Grasset, refused, on the same grounds, to pay me the substantial balance which he owed me. Fortunately, my trustworthy literary agency, the Opéra Mundi, still functioned and paid me not only a balance which was owing but also an advance in crisp new notes.

Meanwhile my secretary, who was as efficient as he was reliable, had been successful. He had obtained two tickets — in the direction of the Swiss frontier only, it is true, to

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Lausanne — on the last train to leave Paris, a miracle which none would credit.

In the afternoon we packed our emergency baggage. What we took was the least we could do with, but, as we were soon to experience it was still far too much. We burned all our remaining papers, gave away the things we could not take, and, in the company of a wonderful bottle of Burgundy we took leave of Paris.

So far, so good. But the events of that afternoon in Paris have probably no like in recent history. The last vehicles, of all kinds, surged in tens of thousands through the streets, repeatedly immobilized by hundreds and hundreds of thousands of pedestrians of all ages and both sexes, most of them heavily laden, pushing perambulators in front of them or dragging animals behind them. The Italian declaration of war, which had in the meantime been officially announced, and the flight of the Government, which had become unofficially known, had caused such a panic that more than a million Parisians, as if whipped on by furies, were striving towards the south — the south, the south, only the south!

No taxicab to the station was to be had. Fortunately, my landlord took pity on us and in his car, after a zigzag journey through small and smaller byways and back streets, we reached the station, the approaches to which were blocked in a radius of two miles or more. 'Good luck,' he said and left us, two miserable human beings with six or seven trunks, standing desolately in a sea of others on the broad place in front of the Gare de l'Est.

I do not know to this day how we contrived to force our way through to the steps leading to the station, which were guarded by heavily-armed troops. When we got there all seemed to have been in vain, for loud-speakers and

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policemen shouted incessantly: 'Railway travel has been suspended.'

But my secretary, who knew Paris better than I, refused to believe these tidings of misfortune. He fought his way through the threateningly outstretched bayonets of the Garde Civile up the stairs and again through the second cordon to the entrance. Ten minutes later he reappeared with the news, conveyed to me by means of signs, that passengers with a valid railway ticket could take their places in the last train, which was already under steam. This was for me the signal to storm the stairs, and I succeeded in this, at the sacrifice of several pieces of luggage, among them my trusty typewriter from Prague. The same struggle was repeated at the entrance and at the ticket-barrier, and at last, after a struggle that had lasted two and a half hours, breathing again, we sat, packed like sardines, in a train of which none knew whether it would leave, when it would leave or where it was going, much less, if, when and where it would arrive.

It went to Dijon and the Swiss frontier. But we only knew that the next morning. For during the night this completely blacked-out train seldom halted, and then not at the completely blacked-out stations, but only in open fields, and that frequently, because the track was blocked by troop trains or hospital trains, or, once, because burning oil-tanks alongside the line threatened to set it afire, or, another time, because German bombers were prowling the line and the train sought to elude their eyes by 'shamming dead'.

But at last, on the morning of June 11th, we reached the Swiss frontier, which, of course, had been closed the day before. That made no difference in my case, because I had had to leave Switzerland, after the bomb explosion at

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Munich on November 9th, 1939, 'without permission to return!'

We discussed what was to be done, and hired a taxicab, which took us to Dijon. From there we hoped by railway to reach a little place near the Atlantic coast, whither a friend, the managing director of a Paris publishing house, had invited us. (Without an invitation a sojourn there was inconceivable.) This little place had the advantage to be situated north of the Loire and near to La Rochelle, so that a way of retreat to England seemed possible.

True, on that June 11th, none dreamed that Hitler's armoured divisions would ever pass the bridges of the Loire. Fighting was still in progress north of the Seine and Marne and the bulk of the French Army, as well as the entire Maginot Line, had not come into the battle.

Nevertheless, it gave us seriously to think, that even in Dijon, which lay hundreds of miles from the front, no regular train services were running. We solaced ourselves with the thought of Nevers or Bourges, from which places we should probably be able to get a train to the coast. Nobody knew anything certain, and the disorganization of the traffic services filled us with foreboding.

The next morning, early, we started off by taxicab, making for the west. Through old Autun, once the episcopal seat of the so unepiscopal Talleyrand, we came about midday, to Nevers. Or rather, we reached its outskirts, because there, for the first time, the monstrous wave of fugitives surged towards us which, beginning from Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and North France, and then reinforced in Paris, Rheims and Chalons, was overflowing the whole land. It was blocking every road and street and path, filling every town and village and house to bursting, making any kind of

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regulation impossible. If, at some later date, the causes of the French collapse should be investigated, a great part of the blame will have to be given to this senseless and uncontrolled flood of fugitives. Not only did it congest the already inadequate railways, it made the roads impassable for troops, disorganized the entire foodstuff supply system, devoured vital reserves of petrol and oil, and above all contributed to a plague-like, outward-spreading discouragement of the population, which must have been a grave handicap to the decisions of the Government. If it is true that this senseless evacuation was officially ordered, its initiators deserve to be decorated by Hitler himself.

The police took the line of least resistance, in this overwhelming crisis, by sending all vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians 'to the south'—ourselves among them. This compelled us to make long detours, but did not halt us in our projected journey to the west. For two days and nights this taxicab ride continued, right across France, and the glimpses it gave us of the condition of the public morale, of organization, and of the Army, were extremely disquieting. Nevertheless, I still hoped, when we reached our destination on June 14th, to be able to wait there until the 'Battle of France' ran itself to a standstill, and then at last to resume my former plans:

I was misled to this confident feeling by the fact that, while there were already no newspapers, the official radio announcements wallowed in optimism. A classic example of this was the specific denial, given out by the French official communiqué, of the London radio report about the sending of French emissaries to German headquarters. Similarly dishonest was the announcement about Reynaud's resignation, which came at this time, and about the advance

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of the German Army. Only from the incessant stream of fugitives could one gain some inkling of the course of events at the front, but that was fragmentary and gave no possibility of gaining a coherent picture of the whole.

This torturing uncertainty caused me one evening, that of June 20th, secretly to listen to the German radio, so that I should be able to obtain from the German Army communiqué comprehensive news of the military situation.

The announcements were catastrophic: 'The dissolution of the French Army is quickly progressing. There is no longer any unified front line. We have crossed the Loire on a broad front. We have attacked the Maginot Line from the rear. The German flag is flying over Strassburg Cathedral.' That was approximately the content of the German announcements. Could it be true? Was the French Army of four million men, allegedly the best-trained and best-equipped army of the world, to be beaten more quickly than the Polish Army? Were Gamelin and Weygand more incompetent than Smigly-Rydz? Was the Government of Marshal Pétain more impotent than that of Colonel Beck?

I resolved at all costs to gain a clear picture of the situation. Only a personal visit to the Commandant of La Rochelle could procure it for me. As all the taxicabs had in the meantime been laid up, I felt myself fortunate that the daughter of my host was driving to La Rochelle, in her ancient Ford, on Friday, June 21st, 1940. The town Commandant was as pleasant as only Frenchmen can be. He confirmed the German radio reports and advised me forthwith to take ship for England. To this end he gave me a special recommendation to the Harbour Commandant. But from this man I learned that the last ship for England had sailed twenty-four hours earlier. 'I have another ship

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here,' he said, 'but these incompetent devils at the Superintendent's Office can't get me any coal. We are lost, M. Strasser.'

I went back to the Town Commandant. 'Yes, we are lost, M. Strasser,' said he, 'I'll give you from army stores enough petrol for you to get away from here and continue your fight. Go to Bordeaux or Bayonne and from there to England. England is our last hope, all of us!'

A brave man, this Town Commandant of La Rochelle, who held out to the bitter end at his lost post. As we left La Rochelle, after receiving the precious petrol from army stores, we were accompanied for miles by the heavy clouds of smoke from burning oil tanks — fired by his order. A few hours later La Rochelle was in German hands.

Yes, France was lost.

Now I had but one thought — somehow or other to get out of France, so that I might somewhere else resume the struggle against Hitler, for the liberation of the German people, and for the liberation and future of Europe.

To begin with, that meant a race with the advancing German mechanized forces, which were meeting with no opposition. And first of all, the problem of transport had to be solved. The train services had long since ceased to operate, the taxicabs had been laid up because of lack of petrol, and it would be more than a fortunate accident if I could obtain a private car. On top of all this, people on every side were already beginning to turn their coats and attune themselves to the impending German occupation, especially as the official radio had in the meantime admitted the beginning of armistice negotiations.

All this shows what a heroic deed was performed by the daughter of my host in helping us to continue our flight in

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her ancient Ford, the top speed of which was less than 30 miles an hour. She knew my name, of course, and the danger to which she exposed herself (on this account I cannot mention her name here, even to honour it), but, on the other hand, she did not know if and when she would ever be able to return to her parents' house, which, in the event, was occupied twenty-four hours later by German troops.

But none of this prevented this brave Frenchwoman from setting out with us for Bordeaux at three o'clock in the morning of June 22nd, after she had spent the whole night overhauling her car, which was suffering direly from the ailments of age.

The distance to Bordeaux was only one hundred and twenty-five miles. But we needed to avoid all main roads, some of which were already held by the most advanced German patrols, and this compelled us to go by the smallest and remotest by-paths, all of which, fortunately, this courageous girl knew from her excursions, so that it was ten o'clock in the morning when we eventually crossed the great bridge over the mouth of the Gironde, where the powder-casks, for its demolition, were already being placed in position.

Bordeaux was a madhouse. The town, normally one of 265,000 inhabitants, had swollen to one of 1,500,000; most of these people were without lodging, many of them without food; but all were frantic with fear and bewilderment. The police powerless, the authorities bemazed, the troops in disintegration; all this completed a picture of chaos the like of which I never saw at the German collapse in 1918, neither in Munich, nor in Kiel, nor in Berlin. It was impossible and senseless to stay in Bordeaux, especially as a visit of investigation showed that the British Consulate was already closed and the staff departed, while in front of the Spanish

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and Portuguese Consulates police held back a crowd of many thousands which would else have stormed these buildings.

Fortunately, I learned, from the Bordeaux office of my literary agency, the Opéra Mundi, that the head of this firm was staying in the neighbourhood of Biarritz. And still greater good fortune — our valiant chauffeuse said she was ready to make even this journey with us, which was a still longer one, so that I should not fall into the hands of the Nazis.

Once more we chose the remotest and obscurest ways through this strange and uncanny district, where there are cork woods, where rare marsh plants grow and where the few inhabitants go on stilts. It was night when we reached the little place on the Atlantic Coast and, happily, found my acquaintance there.

We held a short council of war, which also filled my pockets again. It showed that, with the conclusion of the German-French Armistice on that very evening (which, it is true, was only to enter into force when the still pending French-Italian armistice had been completed) my situation had become completely untenable. Only the most rapid flight to England still offered a hope of salvation.

How right this decision was, was shown next day. My secretary and my host had gone ahead to Bayonne to seek an exit-permit from the Prefect there, to whom he was personally known. I followed a little later in the old Ford, but only reached the outskirts of Bayonne. The policeman on duty there declared my papers, issued under the Reynaud Government, to be invalid and, while volubly abusing the 'emigrant riff-raff' which had egged on France against Hitler, ordered *my arrest*. An armed soldier climbed in beside us and directed our car towards the headquarters of the gendarmerie.

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So that was 'the new spirit' in France! With repulsive alacrity the authorities (and before all, as I was later repeatedly to find, the gendarmes and the police) turned their coats, took their stand beneath the banner of 'accomplished facts', and sought by fervent spittle-licking to make themselves popular with their new, Hitlerist superiors.

My situation was terrible. No man knew of my arrest, for my brave chauffeuse did not know of the meeting-place in Bayonne which I had prearranged with my host and my secretary — and all conversation in the car was forbidden! But after we got out the soldier suddenly became quite friendly and while we were waiting in the dark corridors of police headquarters he declared most openly that he detested these policemen and gendarmes, who had all evaded war service and spent their time tyrannizing over the civilian population, and then asked me what I wanted from such unpleasant people. I assured him warmly that I wanted nothing whatever from them but only to go as quickly as possible to the Préfecture.

Smilingly he led me out of the building again, showed me the direction of the Préfecture — and disappeared. I swear that the old Ford never got under way so quickly as in this moment. For an instant it must have thought its pristine days were come again.

Bayonne offered the same picture as Bordeaux, on a smaller scale. All the streets, cafés, houses and squares were full of panic-stricken human beings. Their only thought was to get to England or Spain. But the Consulates of both these countries were closed, and the Portuguese, who were still officiating, said they were awaiting instructions from Lisbon.

Meanwhile, however, my friends had returned from the Préfecture with a partial success. They had obtained an

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identity-card which was good for admission to the Préfecture that afternoon! Otherwise we could not even have got in! For the officials, quite powerless against the flood of humanity which threatened to overwhelm them, and in addition to that fully occupied with the study of the armistice conditions and the instructions of their new masters, simply took the line of least resistance and closed their doors. It was a masterly performance of endurance, skill and ingenuity that we had been able to obtain even an entrance ticket.

But the same qualities had to be used again in the afternoon to gain access to the Prefect, even with this ticket. Eventually we penetrated, and we actually obtained a *visé* entitling us to leave France by ship in the direction of England.

This permission unfortunately said nothing about the practical possibility. We remarked the difference when we tried to reach the Harbour Commandant's office. Thousands of people surrounded this building, which was guarded by a high iron railing and troops. Ultimately my host, who knew the place and the people, succeeded in gaining another entrance card, for the following morning! 'Provided that the Germans aren't here by then', remarked the official on duty, shrugging his shoulders.

So we went back to our fishing village, where we had at least a place to sleep. The next morning we took leave of our brave chauffeuse, who now set out to try and pass through the German lines and reach her home, more than three hundred miles distant, in the north. We started for Bayonne, to storm the Harbour Commandant's office once more.

The words are literally meant. For there, in spite of fearful rain, stood once again thousands upon thousands of people, who implored, screamed and threatened in many

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languages to be admitted. They climbed the high iron railings and were tickled down again by soldiers with bayonets. Once more my host succeeded, after hours of effort, in fighting his way through and in procuring stamped tickets for the voyage in a small freighter to Casablanca. All the ships to England had long since left.

'We're sailing at six o'clock, all on board by four o'clock' were our instructions. We were there at two o'clock, with our luggage — and saw the ship just moving away, beyond our reach and that of many other passengers. Once more we trod the martyr's way to the Harbour Commandant's office, where the throng was in the meanwhile grown so great that marines had been called out to close it entirely to the public. Again we were lucky. A new authorization entitled us to leave with the last, and even smaller freighter, which was also bound for Casablanca. (As a result of the armistice clauses, ships were no longer allowed to make for England.)

But what availed this piece of paper against that raging mob? Some twenty-four passengers were to be allowed on board; two thousand four hundred or more stood on the quay by the tiny vessel, thronged against the ladder, which was guarded by six sailors. But as I knew that in my case not only life and freedom were at stake, but that all those tortures awaited me which Hitler and Himmler had long prepared for me, I was resolved to be among those twenty-four 'fortunates', even though I should lose my entire luggage. This was divided into two parts; that which was essential, and the surplus, which was less valuable. The last we deposited in the customs office, the other we took with us in our struggle for the places in the ship which meant salvation.

I should need the pen of a Dante to describe those scenes.

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The six sailors had long since yielded to the pressure of the throng and heavily-armed marines had taken their places. All those thousands tried to make the members of the crew understand that they, especially and specifically they, must at all costs be taken aboard. In many languages they offered fantastic sums for a place in 'the last ship to leave France'. Trunks and cases fell, under the pressure of this clamant mob, into the sea. And to cap all, torrential rain, which added the last strokes to the misery of this scene, the despair of these people, the hopelessness of that hour.

I shall never forget the face of a Spanish Republican who, by a desperate exertion of strength, forced his way to the side of the ship, was thrust back by the sailors, screamed like a madman and held fast to it with one hand and fought the sailors with the others, until his fingers loosened, one after the other, and he fell into the sea.

We came aboard. Some member of the crew knew my books and told the captain of this 'special case'. It was high time, for just as the captain announced that the two dozen places were full the final assault on the ship's ladder began. In a trice the soldiers were thrown aside or into the sea and the first of the throng began to shin like monkeys up the ladder, or tried by jumping to catch its rail and then to haul themselves aboard.

The sailors, furious with rage, beat on their heads and hands with bars, hammers and axes, cast off the ship's ladder, which fell into the sea with men hanging to it, and the ship moved away, for the captain ordered immediate departure. This order cost us our entire remaining, and 'valuable' luggage, which was looted before our eyes.

But we were safe! We were at sea, where the mechanized columns of the Nazis could not follow us. What did we care

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for the streaming rain, for the hostility of the crew, who denied the 'damned emigrants' entry to any room with a roof over it and openly declared that they would give us neither food nor water? That was all unimportant compared with the feeling of freedom!

It was June 24th, 1940. By now it was evening and the tide was favourable for the voyage out to the open sea. 'Saved', rejoiced our hearts, and we shook hands in mutual happiness and gratitude.

Suddenly — about three o'clock in the morning — the ship stopped. What was wrong? Nobody knew anything. Then we saw that the soldiers who were aboard to serve the anti-aircraft machine-gun (and who, in contrast to the crew, had behaved politely) were dismounting their gun, throwing their steel helmets in a corner. 'La guerre est fini!'

It was true. At midnight, with the signature of the French-Italian armistice, the previously concluded German-French armistice had entered into force. This meant, for us, that we could not continue on our way, but must return to Bayonne. For Hitler, in the ambition to gain possession of as much French tonnage as possible (and to prevent any from getting away) had ordered that no more French ships should leave France and that those which were at sea should receive telegraphic order to return to their departure ports.

I vainly tried to induce the captain — and not only for our own salvation — to set his course for England and to put his ship at the service of England. This cowardly fellow said he must obey the German radio order and return to Bayonne, and he added derisively: 'You'll be received by the Germans as soon as you get there; they've already occupied the harbour.'

Thank God, that was not so. When we reached Bayonne,

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about eight o'clock in the morning of June 25th, 1940, that chaotic interlude prevailed to which I was often to owe my safety — the French authorities and officials functioned no longer, but the Germans functioned not yet. All kinds of dark and undesirable characters were abroad and despairing fugitives 'requisitioned' the food which they could no longer buy — in short, the picture was one of chaos worse than I have ever seen.

My situation was desperate. At any moment the Nazis might come. There was no further hope of a ship. My identity papers were no longer of any help to me, but were a direct source of danger. Fortunately, I had in reserve another passport, in a different name and different nationality.

So Otto Strasser disappeared and celebrated, as a neutral foreigner, a harmless resurrection. By this means, I hoped, I would be able to get across the Spanish frontier. (My secretary, happily, *was* a foreigner, with a 'decent' passport.)¹

So the Spanish frontier now became our goal, the more especially because one of the soldiers aboard our ship had told us that two big British steamers still lay at anchor off St. Jean de Luz, in order to take off the remnants of the British, Polish and Czech troops.

Once more we were lucky. My uncommonly clever secretary (whom I can only introduce, for pressing reasons, with his *nom de guerre*, 'Hans'), discovered a taxicab which, for much money, brought us to St. Jean de Luz, which we reached about noon, taking with us the remnant of our lug-

¹ Readers who do not know the torments of trying to keep alive and at liberty with a German, Austrian, Spanish or 'stateless' passport, in such a country as France was at this time, can hardly imagine how much is contained in this expression *anständig* (decent, or respectable) as applied to a passport; the fortunate possessor of a valid Swiss or Danish or Swedish or Chilean passport might, in such times, have counted himself luckier than many a millionaire.

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gage, the 'less valuable' part which we had deposited with the customs at Bayonne. St. Jean de Luz is the southernmost port of France, lying about two miles from the Spanish frontier town of Irun, to which a great bridge led, strongly guarded by troops.

The harbour offered the same picture as at Bayonne. Tens of thousands of human beings were there, some of whom besieged the Harbour Commandant (who however kept his office closed), some of whom stared with burning eyes out to sea, where two great British steamers were in fact visible on the horizon, while others thought how they could avoid the guarded bridge and reach the Spanish frontier.

It was all hopeless! Together with a French captain whom we met by chance, an old acquaintance from Paris, we tried to persuade the pilot to take us out to the British ships — in vain. Then my acquaintance hurried away to the aerodrome, hoping to persuade the commandant there, whose friend he was, to fly him and us to General de Gaulle. But after an hour he returned with the alarming news that German aeroplanes had just landed there, to occupy the aerodrome and the harbour of St. Jean de Luz.

My secretary raced off in search of a car to bring us inland. The French captain went, resigned, to his men, who were standing dully in the market place. I stood with the luggage by the harbour, among all those thousands, and thought only 'Well, this is the end'.

At this moment something strange happened. A patrol of ten or twelve German soldiers marched along the harbour street. The great crowd stared spellbound, immovable, as if paralysed at this little troop of men in field-grey, which, looking neither left nor right, made its way through the throng, between the armed French soldiers.

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Then the spell broke! As if scourged by demons, these tens of thousands rushed over the bridge, overpowered the guard, and rolled shrieking, roaring, cursing towards the Spanish frontier, which had long since been closed by the Spaniards and in addition was now guarded by the Germans.

As Hans came back from his search for a car and saw the completely changed scene he asked breathlessly, 'Has death been here and driven all life away?'

I could only answer, 'Just about!'

This seemed the end. The aerodrome, the harbour and the Town Hall were occupied by German troops, Spain was closed, in the streets prevailed that chaos which we already knew. Among it we found a few calm Englishmen of the Royal Air Force led by an officer and we got together with them to discuss the situation. From them we learned that the Germans were to occupy the whole Atlantic coast to a depth of sixty-five miles inland, so that only one hope remained to us — to try and reach unoccupied territory, behind that curtain.

Afoot, that would be impossible. For the Germans would certainly not need more than twenty-four hours to occupy the dividing line and therewith to draw an iron curtain between occupied and the unoccupied territory. It was now six o'clock in the evening and all our efforts to find a car had been vain. How should it now be possible, now that the Germans were already in the town?

But my tough Hans did not lose hope. While I crawled into hiding somewhere, with the luggage, he (who did not need to fear that he would be recognized by the Germans) ransacked the town hour after hour, to find some owner of a car who would risk the journey. And about ten o'clock in the evening he arrived with one — a fugitive from Belgium,

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who for fifty francs a kilometre was ready to drive us out of that one hundred kilometre zone. True, he was only ready to do that after he had satisfied himself, from our passports, of our 'harmlessness'.

We were to start in the morning at seven o'clock, for he had first to find some petrol, and a tyre, and to sleep a little. I would rather not speak of this night. I have many bad and dangerous nights behind me, but this night of June 25th to the 26th in St. Jean de Luz seems to me the worst of all, to date.

In the morning at 6.30 came a knock. It was the son of this Belgian, come to say that his father must unfortunately refuse to drive us, because his mother would not sanction the venture. This was the crowning blow. It was out of the question that we should find another car and in a few hours more the iron curtain would be down — if it had not already been dropped during the night. I was resolved to make an end, as I did not intend, in any circumstances, to fall alive into the hands of Hitler and Himmler.

Hans, once more, found a way out. He went alone (as I could no longer venture into the street on account of the German patrols) to the Belgian, spoke urgently with him, implored the woman not to stand in the way of our salvation, ultimately offered 100 francs a kilometre — and at seven o'clock stood before my door with the car.

It was an exciting journey. At every street-crossing, at every approach to and exit from a village the barriers still stood. But they were unmanned! The French had ceased to man them and the Germans had not yet begun. Only to this gap do we owe the fact that we got through — but nonetheless, every time we came to a village we suffered the same anxious foreboding.

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There was no traffic on the roads. Everything was dead. From the houses startled people looked down on us: 'Aha, the Boches!' Soon we should have the one hundred kilometre zone behind us (to be on the safe side I had agreed with our driver to take us to Oloron, which was about one hundred and fifty kilometres away). Suddenly we had a breakdown. And the driver must not be allowed to notice that we were jumpy, or he would immediately have refused to go farther — he was already worried enough that he would never be able to get back to his wife and child.

But even these hours passed, and ended well. About eleven o'clock we drew up in the market-place of Oloron, took our leave from the Belgian and the greater part of our cash, and breathed once again: 'Saved; this time we are really safe!'

But an old proverb says: 'Praise not the day before evening.'

At the beginning, true, all went well. We found in this little place, which was crowded with fugitives in civilian clothes and in uniform, a car, whose owner was ready to drive us to Pau for five francs a kilometre. Pau was so full of troops, who had fled from the zone of occupation in order to escape captivity, that entry to the town had been forbidden by the police. Thank God, our brave chauffeur, an old Basque who cursed horribly about 'those traitors, Pétain, Laval, and company', was ready to take us on to Tarbes, a bigger town, near the world-famous pilgrimage town of Lourdes. There he sought and even found, in spite of appalling overcrowding, a lodging for us in an inn, the owner of which was known to him.

So, on the evening of June 26th, 1940, we were happily in Tarbes, about one hundred kilometres away from the

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dividing line between occupied and unoccupied territory, which had been occupied by the Germans punctually at noon of this day — just two hours after we had passed through. Everything looked promising, until I read the newspaper, for the first time for several days. There I found the full text of the armistice which Hitler had dictated to the French and one of the paragraphs struck me like a blow in the face.

It was that which imposed on the French Government the obligation to surrender to Hitler refugees on its soil who were wanted by him.

As I knew Hitler and his gang, I knew what this meant — the handing-over of all well-known enemies of Hitler who were in French territory. That 'Hitler's Enemy Number One' would also occupy the first place on the list to be laid before the Vichy Government was a thing about which I had no illusions.

True, I had my incognito-passport under another name and nationality. But this passport had one great defect — it did not show my sojourn in France. And above all, my identity card bore my right name. But as martial law prevailed and all travellers in any part of France were under the strictest obligation to report to the police (quite apart from the frequent police raids in hotels and restaurants and in the streets) this meant that for the duration of my further stay in France I should have to live in hiding, pursued not only by Himmler's agents but also by the entire French police.

That was a cruel blow. For days and weeks I dared not show myself in any public resort or in any frequented place. In the fearful summer heat of South France I had to spend the whole day in cellars and garrets, the only places we could find, while Hans went out to buy food and to settle with Officialdom — for *his* papers, thank God, were all right.

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We discussed our further plans. Tarbes was hopeless. It was not near enough to the Spanish frontier to serve as a base for an illegal crossing, nor did it contain any consulate where we could apply for the necessary *visés* for a legal departure.

For both these Toulouse alone, the capital of Southern France, was suitable. True, the distance from Tarbes to Toulouse was but a hundred miles, but the appalling dearth of petrol and the breakdown of traffic services made the covering of these hundred miles a gigantic task. After three days of exhausting search (I took up the hunt for a car and Hans the struggle with the Préfecture, the police and the gendarmerie, and we both were victorious) we succeeded, and on Saturday, June 29th, we rolled into Toulouse.

Toulouse! Much-lauded Queen of the South, I shall hold you in evil memory for the rest of my life!

Normally inhabited by some 150,000 people, more than a million human beings now surged through the old streets, and fell like locusts upon everything to eat and to drink and to wear, so that, with the simultaneous breakdown of the transport services, there was soon scarcity in everything. Tens of thousands of soldiers, leaderless and undisciplined, lounged about. The police did not venture to interfere with them, but proved their intrepidity in their dealings with the unfortunate emigrants, Germans, Poles, Czechs, Jews and Spanish Republicans, who were delivered defenceless into their hands.

I shall never forget that transport of a thousand or twelve hundred German Jewesses who one day arrived at the station, after they had been released from internment. Without money, husband or son (these had for

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weeks been interned in some other camp), without any knowledge of the place or the language, these unfortunate women stood about in the burning sun in front of the station for hours until the Quakers and the Jewish Relief Committee brought them at least succour and counsel.

It was impossible for us to find a room anywhere, far less a bed. Hour after hour we wandered the streets, all in vain. Neither money nor fair words availed. A Spanish nursing sister, who was sorry for us, eventually gave us an address where we could at least leave our luggage and find two chairs for the night. In an old house, infested with rats and fleas, we found a room beneath the roof with two chairs in it, and in spite of the heat, the mosquitoes and the fleas we collapsed into them.

The next day we saw the same, hopeless picture. This fortified me in my original idea, which was to try and cross the Spanish frontier secretly and illegally. I obtained good maps and found that the most promising route would be by way of Andorra. This smallest republic of the world lies some hundred and fifteen miles south of Toulouse, between France and Spain. (Of late Spain has unloosed an 'Anschluss' movement there, which, if supported by the necessary use of force, seems not to be without prospect of success.) As Andorra enjoys a kind of treaty-cousinship with France, and no very strict frontier watch was to be expected there, and the mountainous nature of the frontier facilitates illegal entry, I thought this project to be the most favourable. If and how and when we should later be able to cross from Andorra into Spain was not so important. In any event, Andorra was independent in international law, so that my neutral passport was likely to be recognized there, and I had the hope of being able to proceed further by legal ways.

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So on Monday, July 1st, 1940, in the early morning we started out for Andorra, in a taxicab for which we had agreed to pay a very high price. Our destination was Ax les Thermes, a well-known spa, and therefore not likely to arouse suspicion. It was but five miles from the Andorran frontier, which, of course, could only be crossed by night and afoot.

With extreme good fortune we passed through the many military posts and reached Pamiers, twenty-five miles from Ax; Foix, twelve and a half miles from Ax; and Tarascon, six and a half miles from Ax.

And there, at the exit from Tarascon, fate overtook us. The very name of Tarascon, this townlet of braggarts and loudspeakers, brings a smile to the lips of every Frenchman. We had passed happily through it, but at the exit a gendarme, the renown of whose forefathers probably left him no rest, found us 'suspicious'. We were taken to the police station, where we found the high-and-mightiest man of this comic town to be far from comic. On the contrary, the dignity of the law oozed out of him, from his scalp to the soles of his feet. Two foreigners in the neighbourhood of the frontier! These could only be dangerous spies, thought this man. (What we could have spied upon in his miserable Tarascon or even in the whole of France, which had collapsed and fallen out of the war, was his secret.) It was all one. He detained us, telephoned a description of us to Toulouse, and received orders to send us there.

This was an appalling prospect. Thank Heaven, he had not sufficient men to send one with us in the car. He ordered us and the chauffeur to go to police headquarters at Toulouse and gave us the corresponding written instructions.

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Of course, we had no intention to do him this favour. Our fat chauffeur, too, who like all Frenchmen cherished the most delightful detestation of the police, found that we had been sufficiently punished by the loss of one thousand francs, his fare. But we had to turn back, nonetheless — six and a half miles from Ax, and eleven and a half miles from the frontier which spelt salvation!

Tired and worried, for our descriptions had now been given to the Toulouse police as those of 'suspect' persons, we returned from this unsuccessful attempt to the stifling heat of Toulouse on the evening of July 1st.

What does an old soldier do when his surprise attack fails? He goes into trenches, to prepare a new venture, thought out in every detail. That was my position. Now that my attempt to escape by illegal means had failed, a carefully-prepared legal attempt had to be studied and carried out.

It was a gigantic task! Eight days passed before we found, at last, a lodging and exchanged the chairs in our flea-ridden garret for a real bed. Ten days passed before we could obtain a card of admission to an interview with the Portuguese Consul. (For I had now to obtain the following things, in the following order: first, a *visé* to enter Portugal, second a transit *visé* to travel through Spain, third a French exit-permit to enable me to leave France.)

Do you know what it means, to wait in the street every day from eight o'clock to noon, in blazing summer heat, before a consulate guarded by soldiers, who hold back the throng that continually beats against the door? War is certainly a dreadful thing. But many unnecessary hardships and cruelties arise through the grotesque inability of

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officialdom to adjust itself to and master any sudden emergency, or to organize anything. Every passport official — this was for weeks my daily prayer — should experience these torments just once. Then things would soon be better.

At last I stood before the little, portly Portuguese, who told me, in the most friendly way, that even my neutral passport would first of all need the entrance *visé* for some American country, because Portugal now granted only transit *visés* (of course, against the simultaneous production of a ship's passage, already paid).

Now I did not know what to do. An entrance *visé* to an American country seemed a thing impossible for me to obtain, because my passport was not in order; it lacked, as I say, the entries to prove my sojourn in France. Moreover, there was in Toulouse only a Chilean vice-consulate, which had no authorization to give entrance *visés*.

After long reflection we came to the conclusion that a journal to Vichy alone might still solve both problems. In Vichy I still had good friends in the Government (soon after this, it is true, they gave up collaboration with Hitler's mercenaries there) and in Vichy all American States were represented. But as I, with my faulty papers (the lack of an identity card in my new name, in particular, was a continual source of trouble to me) could not go there, the indefatigable Hans once more set out on this difficult mission.

He left for Vichy by one of the first trains to start running again, on July 10th — and was not seen again! For eight days I waited in my little room, lived frugally on bread, cheese and red wine (may Heaven bless the red wine of France, which even in those days was still to be had for from three to five francs a litre), dared not

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venture forth to buy anything — for my last piece of identification-paper, my incognito-passport, had also gone to Vichy with Hans. But a man without a passport is in the Europe of today no man, but an outlaw and outcast, whose detection may make any policeman proud.

These days used up my nerves more than weeks in the drumfire. I know this, for I spent four years on the Western Front.

And at eight o'clock in the evening of July 18th returned my messenger, whom I had believed dead — without a *visé*, but with money! All my friends in the Government implored me to get out of France somehow, because my extradition had already been demanded, and the German Government had repeatedly pressed for it. Of course, they smilingly told Hans: 'We are only looking for Herr Otto Strasser, not for Herr X. Y., as your friend is now called.' (I learned later that the Hitler Government saw a 'proof of ill faith' in this attitude of the then government in Vichy.) But in spite of that, none had any longer the courage or the influence to give me the trumpery exit *visé* and thereby to make an honest document of my incognito-passport, to make it at least proof against the suspicious eyes of the police. But one good result of Hans's journey was an accidental meeting with the head of my literary agency, who once again filled our depleted purse.

So, after three weeks of exertion, this way out too seemed to be closed. This was the more dangerous in that the progressively deteriorating Government knew no better way of ingratiating itself with Hitler than by taking drastic measures against 'emigrants and Jews', who were pilloried as 'the enemies of France' to the howling applause of a spineless and servile press.

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But 'help is nearest when the need is greatest'. One evening (I could not go out at any other time) I was strolling along the quiet bank of the canal when I met the friendly Portuguese, to whom once more, quite privately, I told my tale of woe, of course, without revealing my identity. And this good man knew a way out! 'Go tomorrow to No. 8 Avenue Strasbourg and get a tourist's *visé* for Curaçao; then we can book the ship's passage by telegraph, and after that I can give you the Portuguese transit *visé*.'

A blessing on this man, who, while keeping within his instructions, found a means to help me! The mysterious address proved to be the Netherlands consulate, which was 'half officially' still functioning (afterwards it was closed at Hitler's order, with all other legations and consulates of the German-occupied countries). The official there was an angel of salvation in human guise. Without an indiscreet word I obtained (together with dozens of Jewish emigrants who had followed the same tip) a tourist's *visé* for Curaçao.

Now the Portuguese and Spanish transit *visés* were quickly obtained, while — a black cloud looming in the background — the French exit permit still had to be procured. It was impossible for me to go in person. Even the excursions of those latter days had already brought me several disagreeable encounters. No less than three times was I accosted by former fellow-internees from the Buffalo Concentration Camp, each time, of course, in my right name. I also had to fear that something of the German inquiries in Vichy might have seeped through to the authorities in Toulouse, and the anti-foreigner decree of the new Ministry was making officialdom stricter every day.

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Hans once more achieved a masterly stroke in making friends with a woman official in the competent quarter, within three days, to such effect that my passport received the exit *visé*; probably the eyes of this official lady rested more upon the eyes of Hans, while she was doing this, than upon the somewhat vague entries in my passport.

One danger still remained. The gendarmerie had yet to put *their* rubber-stamp upon the already granted exit *visé* — for there is no collapse of a State so great that Saint Bureaucratus does not survive it. The gendarmerie, however, expressed misgivings about giving this endorsement and demanded a further application the next day. That was an abominable night, the night of July 30th-31st! But even this danger passed. At 11.30 Hans reappeared, triumphantly waving the now completely up-to-date passport.

And at 1.15 we left Toulouse Station for Narbonne and Perpignan.

After that, all was simple. I spent a last night on French soil, in Gêrbère, and took leave from my loyal companion, who for family reasons wished to stay a while in France. There was a last frontier examination, and French friendliness (in spite of all regulations) allowed me, and all other travellers, to take all their money with them. On August 1st, 1940, at two o'clock in the afternoon, I reached Port Bou, the Spanish frontier station.

My flight had succeeded, once more! Raging, Hitler's men had to report to their lord that they had lost track of their victim.

How they found the trail again — in a lonely monastery in Portugal — and how they once again took up the chase and how I once again eluded them — that is another story, which can only be told when this war is over.

PART ONE

FROM KAISER TO REPUBLIC

CHAPTER I

VIDOVDAN

(June 28th, 1914)

A BLAZING summer's day. In nearly every village, on such a Sunday as this, the musicians strike up a dance tune, life is good for young and old, and in the crowded inn gardens the merry day is carried deep into the warm night, with the more gusto because, in Catholic countries, this Sunday is followed by another holiday, June 29th, the day of Saints Peter and Paul, so that a man may have time and leisure to sleep however long to-day's festival goes on.

But between the Adriatic and the North Sea this day, so happily begun, is suddenly interrupted by the tidings that are first called out in the Ringstrasse in Vienna about noon and then spread like lightning, in Graz and Brünn, in Prague and Lemberg, in Munich and Dresden and Berlin, tidings that cause the music to die away, the holiday makers to stop and listen, tidings that everywhere bring dismay and, even more than their dire content, carry with them the premonition of greater disaster.

In Kiel Bay, the Kiel Regatta, the favourite pleasure of the German Emperor, is about to reach its spectacular finish. The white sails are filling with a light breeze; a cloudless, almost southern sky stretches over this peaceful and festive scene; and even the cannon of the German cruisers in the background seem more toylike than deadly. Then, suddenly, a launch dashes across the blue water to the Imperial yacht.

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An officer demands to be taken immediately to the Kaiser; he must make his report in person, dreadful things have happened. Shocked, indignant, angry, Wilhelm listens to the tidings which are to spoil his pretty regatta, and perhaps much more as well. The sails are taken in, the flags lowered to half-mast, and in Kiel, as in a thousand other places, the music dies away.

What are these fearful tidings? What has happened?

A few minutes before ten o'clock in the morning the guns in the forts of Sarajevo, the romantic and almost oriental capital of Bosnia, fired their salute. At that moment the car carrying the heir to the throne, arrived from Bad Ilidze, reached the outskirts of the town.

Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria and Este, nephew of the venerable Emperor Francis Joseph, expectant successor to the Imperial Crown of Austria, to the Holy Hungarian Crown of St. Stephen, to the Bohemian Crown of Saint Wenceslas, to the Imperial, Royal, Princely, Ducal and lesser Crowns, titles and dignities of Galicia and Lodomeria, Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, Bosnia and Rama, Siebenbürgen and Tirol, Styria, etcetera, etcetera, Inspector General of the entire armed forces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, makes his entry into the capital of the youngest Austrian province.

The Archduke is one of the most disputed men, not only of the ancient Empire on the Danube, which is cracking at every joint and seam, but of the whole Continent. For some he is but the reactionary, bigoted, clerically-nose-led representative of a feudal and medieval conception of The State, a scion of the Old Regime, whose advent would mean, for the Monarchy, the beginning of a new counter-Reformation.

For those others of his contemporaries who know him or have heard of him, and these are certainly fewer but not necessarily worse informed than the first party, he is the really great statesman, the Renewer of the Empire, the *Renovator imperii*, whose strong hand will wield the hammer with which an old State that is coming off its hinges may be restored and restrengthened. They who count on Franz Ferdinand are not only uncritical spirits, Christian Socials and fervent clericals. So mercilessly critical a man as the Viennese satirist Karl Kraus, the mortal enemy of Austrian lackadaisicalness and degenerate softness, sees in Franz Ferdinand, for whom he is to write an inspiring memoir, the predestined saviour of a disintegrating world, the embodiment of real kingship.

In the Monarchy the heir to the throne — 'Este' as he is called by the politicians, 'F.F.', as the high officials and courtiers briefly refer to him — has certainly more enemies than friends. The Pan-Germans, the Magyar ruling class, the Social Democrats and the extreme Liberals, all hate and fear him. The Camarilla which in the course of the years has formed itself around the old Kaiser, at its head the Prince of Montenuovo, the High Chamberlain of the Court (a bastard of the Habsburgs and descendant of the Empress Marie Luise, Napoleon's widow, and hermorganatic husband, Count Niepperg) intrigues against the heir to the throne and his circle (which they know as the 'Belvedere', from that baroque palace of Prince Eugene which Franz Ferdinand uses as his residence in Vienna). But a great part of the oppressed nationalities of Hungary, of the Slav subject-peoples of the Monarchy as a whole, hope from the heir to the throne a reform of the Reich under which these step-children of the ancient family-of-peoples on the Danube

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will at last be allowed at the table so long reserved only for the privileged few — the Magyars, the Germans, the Poles, and, at times and at the lower end, even the Czechs. Thus Franz Ferdinand's palace sees the comings and goings of Croat and Rumanian politicians, and the young and talented leader of the Slovaks, Dr. Milan Hodza¹ has the ear and favour of the ruler of the Belvedere, although he is a Calvinist.

Franz Ferdinand's idea is the federalization of the Reich. He would put a strong central military power in the place of the prevailing dual-rule of Vienna and Budapest, and give the several peoples of the Empire far-reaching home-rule in their cultural and social affairs. Alongside the Germans and the Magyars, the Slavs, and especially the Croat South Slavs, should become an essential and privileged component in the Empire, perhaps in the form of a third, Croat State, which would make the dual, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to a triple Monarchy.

And now this Archduke enters the youngest Slav province of the Reich. The Catholic Croats there see in Este the guarantor of their future. The Bosnians, who are Mohammedans, preserve a neutral attitude towards him. But the Serbs, that is the Greek Orthodox section of the Bosnian people, which linguistically forms a single unit, hate Franz Ferdinand in particular even more than they hate Vienna and Austria in general. For their goal is the Great Serbian Reich reaching to the Adriatic, the destruction of the Austrian Monarchy, the unchallenged leadership of the Serbs and of their Royal House of Karageogrevitch in the South Slav world. The Serbs of Bosnia regard the visit of Franz Ferdinand as a provocation, as a piece of

¹ Later Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia.

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arrogant mockery and as an affront to their honour. For not only does this Catholic, who means to renew Austria and therewith to destroy the irredentist dreams of the Pan-Serbs, come to Sarajevo, which is intolerable enough in itself, but, what seems to them an especial taunt, he comes on Vidovdan, June 28th.

On the day of Saint Vitus in the Greek calendar, that is, on June 28th by the Gregorian reckoning, centuries ago, in the year 1389, the Serbs were overcome on the *Kosovo polje*, the Field of Thrushes, by the army of the Turkish Sultan Murad. That was the end of the first Great Serbian Reich. Centuries of crushing Turkish rule could not make the Serbs forget it; its memory was bequeathed from generation to generation in the Raja, the enslaved mass of Christian subjects of the Osmanic Sultanate. But with it was bequeathed and inherited the memory of another deed. On the eve of Vidovdan in 1389 a Serb youth, Milosch Obilitch, stole into the victor's tent and stabbed Sultan Murad. If during those 500 years anything alleviated the agony of the Serbs over their defeat on the Field of Thrushes and glorified for them the tragedy of their nation, it was this avenging deed of Milosch Obilitch.

And now another Vidovdan has dawned, by all appearance a happy and festive day. Azure stretches the sky above the panorama of the mountains round Sarajevo and the valley of the narrow Miljacka, above the cupolas, minarets and church-towers with the Peter's cross and the Andrew's cross, above the old Turkish citadels and the modern forts, above the vivid bazaars, and the oriental cafés, above the cemeteries, those with the Christian cross and those others with the Turkish gravestones, that look like sugarloaves.

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At ten o'clock the heat of the sun is already pitiless, blindingly white the chalky streets and walls. For that reason the riverside road, along which the cars come, is almost empty on the one side. On the other side, where the houses stand, such shade as they throw on the pavement is contested by curious onlookers and loyal k. u. k. officials.¹ (Many of these, incidentally, were Galician Jews, who hardly helped to make Austrian rule popular.)

No troops line the route. The garrison of the province, about 25,000 men, lies some two miles away, in the mountains round Ilidze, resting from sweltering and strenuous manœuvres. The Governor, General Potiorek, had refused to send the troops into the city because, in their dusty manœuvre uniforms, they were not presentable enough for the occasion! Thus that military strength is lacking which ensured the safety of the Emperor Francis Joseph when he visited Sarajevo a few years before. Law and order are in the care of the meagre and not very trustworthy police.

Now the first car, containing the Mayor and a few police officials, reaches the houses on the riverside road. It passes the Cumarja Bridge, but only the Medical Officer of Health posted near the bridge, Dr. Bernstein, notices that at this moment a young man, who, alone in the blazing sun, leans against the quayside wall, takes a curious object, like an English pipe, from his pocket and knocks it against the wall. Bernstein, for the second time, draws the attention of a policeman to this man, but the police do not bother themselves with his strange behaviour.

¹ *k.u.k.*, is the abbreviation of *kaiserlich und königlich*, or imperial and royal, and all government servants or employees, of whatever rank, in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, were thus briefly known as 'kah-und-kah' officials.

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In the second car Count Harrach, who owns it, sits next to the chauffeur, behind are the Archduke and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg; facing them sits General Potiorek. The heir to the throne was come unwillingly to Bosnia. He feared the heat, and, together with the sun, probably the politically overheated temper of the province, which was prosperous but politically maladministered and had become the red-hot centre of the Serb Chauvinist movement. Up to the last moment Franz Ferdinand had expected an order to cancel the visit. But when he arrived in Vienna from his Bohemian castle the Emperor, against previous arrangements, had already left for Ischl; and the Archduke, moved by a certain obstinacy, decided after all to go. As the journey began the electric lighting failed in his saloon coach. The company sat by candlelight. 'A damned scandal,' swore the Archduke, 'it's like being in a vault; this is a good beginning.'

The heir to the throne had an especial motive to go through with the journey — the fact that he could take his morganatic wife with him. In Bosnia, which was under military administration, those rigid laws of Spanish court etiquette did not hold which Prince Montenuovo, in Vienna, manipulated as a refined form of torture for the humiliation of the Duchess of Hohenberg, thus stinging the Archduke ever and again to impotent fury. In Sarajevo, at last, the Archduke would be able to have his consort, whom he adored, appear as his wife in full right and title. She sits, now, at his right hand in the car; yesterday she presided, with him, over the banquet at Ilidze; two days ago, without any precaution, she visited with him the bazaars of Sarajevo. They had mixed with the people, been cordially greeted. Close behind them on that Friday, revolver in his pocket,

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stood Gavrilo Princip. But he did not shoot, then. It was not yet Vidovdan, destiny had not yet given him his cue.

The young man at the Cumarja Bridge suddenly raises his arm and throws something. It falls on the folded hood of the car, the Archduke makes a movement to ward it off. It rolls over the edge of the car and falls into the street. The next moment an explosion follows. The car behind is damaged, a few people are wounded, the Governor's aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel Merizzi, has a serious head wound. The bomb-thrower, Chabrinowitch, jumps into the Miljacka and is there overpowered.

At the Town Hall the Archduke interrupts the Mayor in his address of welcome: 'This is a fine thing, to be received with bombs! So, and now make your speech!' When the arrest of the bomb-thrower is reported the heir to the throne remarks sarcastically, 'You'll see, instead of being put beyond harm, this fellow will be decorated with the Francis Joseph Order, in the real Austrian style!' And as the procession, after the visit to the Town Hall, moves off again, he says to Count Harrach: 'I think we shall get a few more bullets today.' He is pale and visibly agitated, but his pride again forbids him to give, himself, any order for his protection. General Potiorek, however, knows nothing better to suggest than that, instead of driving through the inner town, as had been planned, the cars should take a different route, again along the riverside road, and thus to the hospital, where Franz Ferdinand wishes to visit the wounded officer, and then straight to the station.

The subsequent investigation showed that the Archduke during the first part of the ride alone had passed through an 'avenue' of seven conspirators who, armed with bombs or revolvers, were posted along that riverside road. Only

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one of them, Chabrinowitch, actually dared an attempt. Whether a second, the teacher Ilitch, one of the leaders of the conspiracy, shot as Chabrinowitch threw his bomb, was not certainly established by that investigation.

At this moment none knows that there are still conspirators about, where they stand, or how they could be thwarted. Only the foreboding of a new murderous attempt lies in the air. Not even the investigation is to show whether the other conspirators remained at their posts on the riverside road. From Gavrilo Princip alone, through his deed, will it be learned that he changed his position near the Lateiner Bridge and placed himself at a spot where, if the original route were followed, the Archduke's car was to turn off from the Appelkai, as the riverside road is called, into the Franz-Josephs-Strasse.

What now comes is the strangest episode in this great drama, and one which today remains unexplained. The driver of the Archducal car, in which General Potiorek had again taken his place opposite the heir to the throne and his wife, while Count Harrach this time stood on the left footboard, covering the Archduke on that side with his body, actually turned aside from the Appelkai into the Franz-Josephs-Strasse! Was he not told of the change of route? Did he forget his orders? Did he intentionally ignore them? This is one of those important trifles which have not been cleared up. In any case, the car did not, as had been decided, drive quickly along the Appelkai, but turned aside, townward. Potiorek noticed the mistake and ordered the driver back. By this means the vehicle came for a moment to a standstill. And it stopped, in the narrow street, at that very point where Princip had taken his post, to whom the Archduke now offered an easy target. Two

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shots sounded. The Duchess collapsed unconscious across the lap of her husband. At first sight, she might have fainted, from shock. The Archduke whispers: 'Sopherl, don't die! Stay for our children . . .' and he repeats this a few times, softer and softer, finally rattling in his throat. A thin jet of warm blood spurts into Count Harrach's face. He realizes for the first time that the Archduke is seriously wounded. The blood is coming from his throat, then it trickles from his mouth.

When they come to the Konak, the Government House, the Duchess is already dead. The bullet, malshaped in passing through the side of the car, pierced her liver, and internal bleeding began at once. The Archduke's heart still beats feebly but his eyes are glazing. To the end the dying man sat upright in his seat, proudly and defiantly refusing to bow to King Death, approaching. Now he lies with torn throat on the bier, praying priests, dismayed officers, helpless officials about him.

Outside, the murderer has been almost lynched. Then the turgid passions of the mob break further bounds. The Serbs, the compatriots of the murderer, will be outside the protection of the law for hours to come. The Croats and Moslems, putting on the white cloak of patriotism and singing the Austrian national anthem, give rein to their hatred of the Serbs. There is looting, and beating; the racehorses belonging to the wealthy leader of the Serb Party have their throats cut. At last drums sound, soldiers appear, and martial law is called.

The conspirators hide their weapons, disperse and seek hiding-places. One after another they are arrested and some betray their accomplices. Others remain dumb. Three of them are yet to end, when the world war has already

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begun to rage, on the gallows. The two assassins are minors and will be sentenced to twenty years, and both are to die in the casemates of Theresienstadt. Five others will end their lives in those same casemates. Four of the convicted conspirators are to survive the world war and to see that hour in which official Serbia acknowledges them her children, and puts up in Sarajevo a tablet to the memory of Gavriel Princip and his deed, the hour in which the Czechoslovak administration in Theresienstadt gives a street the name of 'Princip Avenue'. True, the glorification of the murder is to begin during the war itself. For instance, one Benito Mussolini will write on July 10th, 1915, in the *Popolo d'Italia*: 'Hail Princip's revolver and Chabrinowitch's bomb!'

While the coffins with the bodies travel first by the narrow gauge railway to Metkovitch, on the Adriatic, and then aboard the battleship *Viribus unitis* to Trieste, the investigation begins. The authorities uncover a far-stretching and narrow-meshed network, a Serb extremist conspiracy, and the first threads leading to Belgrade show themselves. But as yet none thinks of war, the diplomats still believe that they may go on holiday and leave the affair to the detectives. Nevertheless, on this warm and starry summer evening of Vidovdan, 1914, an oppressive foreboding lies upon the world that the shots of Sarajevo herald mischief a millionfold as great, that the three orphans of Konopischt will not be the only ones to mourn at the bier of murdered parents. A tremor goes through the world, not only because one of the mighty has fallen, but in sensitive premonition of a catastrophe.

CHAPTER II

THIRD CLASS BURIAL

THE German Emperor, a Russian Grand Prince who had already packed his trunks, Kings, Princes, Generals and Ministers from all parts of Europe who wished to come to the burial of Este, have been put off. The great Congress of Princes at the burial service, the day of expiation for the murder, have been cancelled. The pretext is that the security of the foreign rulers cannot be adequately ensured. Perhaps that was actually one of the reasons. A panic fear of new outrages prevails in these days, wild rumours course about. Still, Vienna has enough troops for the princes to be led between two rows of bayonets, and Vienna has 'the best police in the world'; this is not Sarajevo.

Gradually something becomes known about the circumstances of the murder. The heir to the throne had been given two detectives for his protection! Just two detectives, and a few weeks earlier, when Wilhelm II visited Este at Konopischt, eight hundred plainclothes men were posted in the rose-garden of the Bohemian castle. The assassins had held their meetings in cafés and teashops, distributed their bombs and revolvers in another café, had themselves photographed with bombs in their pockets! Some of them were youngsters known to the police, they had been involved in school scandals and had been expelled, and they had sojourned in Belgrade. The nests of Serb propaganda should have been known. Everybody knew them in this Balkan town, the life of which, in the oriental manner, was lived

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on the streets or in notorious dens well known to the police. The failure of the police is more than striking. More striking still, — Vienna and Budapest did nothing for the safety of the heir to the throne. The Budapest Police Commissioner, who for some strange reason had been charged with the supervision of the Sarajevo police, had asked for 700 police; the competent Ministry had refused this as being too costly and had approved the aforementioned two. Through a grotesque coincidence, these two were on the morning of June 28th not on the spot. They should have travelled in one of the cars from Ilidze to Sarajevo. But while the cars were filling the detectives tactfully waited until their superiors had found seats, and then, suddenly, there was no more room! The cars moved off and the two police officials followed afoot — two good hours beneath the Bosnian sun. As they reached the hills before the town, and saw below them the white houses, the green gardens, the ribbon of the Miljacka and the Appelkai, they heard the tumult caused by the second, and fatal attempt.

Only after the world war did it become known that the Serbian Government had uttered a warning in Vienna. True, the warning seems not to have been very urgent. Further, it was not given in the right diplomatic quarter, the Foreign Ministry, but to the Austrian Finance Minister, Bilinski, who was the highest administrative authority for Bosnia. Perhaps the Serb Minister was on better terms with the Pole Bilinski than with the Magyar and Bohemian Counts in the Foreign Ministry. Bilinski, again, felt that the matter was not one for his department. After the war he frequently expressed, in tortuous phrases, his view about it. What he learned, whether he did anything, and why he

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did not do more, are things that have never become quite clear. At all events, people in Vienna and Budapest were not especially worried.

As a Croat deputation presents itself before the Hungarian Prime Minister, Stephan Tisza, the almighty lord of that kingdom, to express its regret at the death of the heir to the throne, this Magyar Junker, who possibly may allow himself to be guided somewhat by his Calvinistic belief in the predestination of all happenings, cuts them short with the words: 'The good God wished it so, and one should not quarrel with the decrees of God!'

In Vienna, two schools have formed. The Chief of the General Staff, Conrad, without awaiting the result of the investigation, sees in the outrage a political undertaking by Serbia. In the early afternoon of June 28th, Conrad, who on the evening before had spoken with the Archduke, received in the Croatian town of Karlstadt the news of the murder; he had already heard from the garrison commander in Agram (Zagreb) that a rumour to this purport was abroad. Among the most striking features of these days is the fact that rumours run quicker than the official announcements, and even run ahead of the actual events. The conspiracy seems to have been a public secret in Bosnia, and in Serbia too, where high dignitaries spent the Sunday in anxious anticipation.

Conrad reports in his *Memoirs* that he saw through the background and results of the deed on the spot:

The whole gravity of the stroke was at once clear to me, as well as the consequences to which it must lead. The murder in Sarajevo was the last link in a long chain. It was not the deed of a single fanatic, it was

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the work of a well-organized conspiracy, it was the Serbian declaration of war on Austria-Hungary. It could only be answered by war.

In the following days Conrad spoke with the Kaiser, with the Generals, and with the diplomats, before all with the Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold. But he does not at once carry conviction. The Kaiser is at first opposed. Pessimistic as he was become in a long life dogged by misfortune, he foresaw evil consequences from a policy of overtrumping. In the first audience after the murder, on July 5th, he showed himself to the General to be tired of life. They spoke of the sudden death of General Leithner, of the death of the Italian chief-of-staff Pollio. The Kaiser said: 'They all die, I alone cannot die', and to Conrad's interjection, that all were glad that His Majesty lived, he complained, 'Yes, yes, but one is left quite alone'.

Berchtold, it is true, like Conrad wants action, and at first probably the great diplomatic success of Aerenthal in the year 1909, with the humiliation of Serbia, dances before him as precedent and aim. But Berchtold wishes diplomatically to prepare this action, he wants to finesse, as his training and his understanding of the world prompt him.

Conrad has often been placed among those chiefly guilty of the World War. True, that nobody has admitted so openly and without reserve as he to have desired and sought that war from 1907 on. Conrad desired the preventive war. He saw the Monarchy, the defence of which devolved upon him, threatened by the Serbian irredentists, he saw the growth of the Balkan States, which had developed from insignificant principalities into serious military factors, he saw the military superiority of Russia increase from year to year, and he was convinced that in the event of war the

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Italian 'Ally' of the Monarchy would take the opposite side. The only salvation seemed to him to lie in attacking one or other of tomorrow's enemies today and making him powerless. In 1907 he wished to attack Italy, in 1909 Serbia, in 1911 Italy again, and in 1912-13 again Serbia. True, a frivolous and ferocious doctrine! But Conrad was a soldier, despite his long political treatises, and although he tried to influence policy he had in fact until 1914 no power over it. It should not be forgotten that generals always incline to preventive measures and seldom have moral misgivings. The Japanese attacked the Russian squadron at Port Arthur without declaration of war. Lord Fisher, in 1905, wished to fall upon the German fleet in its harbours and sink it. Schlieffen devised, in all tranquillity and without scruples of conscience, the attack on Belgium. Foch burned, in 1919, to go on to Berlin and after that to Moscow. In actual fact, the leaders of the policy of Vienna did not accept Conrad's policy until 1914. Francis Joseph always bluntly rejected it and for a time, in 1911-12 dismissed Conrad. The heir to the throne, in 1909 and 1913, in decisive hours voted against Conrad. Aehrenthal was antagonistic to Conrad and by no means allowed himself to be talked over. Berchtold, too, in 1914, still plays his own game, one, for the rest, less skilful than that of Conrad. For if the 'punitive action' was desired, if the war was to be portrayed as a reflex action of the Monarchy provoked, the blow should have been struck at once; Europe, still under the impression of the criminal outrage at Sarajevo, should have been confronted with an accomplished fact, and after the first blow, negotiations should have been begun with a rifle in one hand and a substantial pledge for their successful outcome in the other. This would, above all, have been understood in

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London. For even at the last moment, after the declaration of war, Grey proposed that Austria should occupy Belgrade and then negotiate. The diplomatic action which Berchtold desired might have been diplomatically successful; but as a prelude to war it was unsuitable, for precisely this laid the whole onus of responsibility on Austria and made the diplomats of the Vienna Ballhausplatz appear to be the real conspirators.

More culpable than Conrad, then, if guilty men are to be sought, was the responsible representative of foreign policy, Count Berchtold. Conrad's guilt to his own country lay in another direction. His part should have been openly to expound the military situation to Francis Joseph and the Foreign Minister and on military grounds to counsel against war. He confesses that he held the favourable opportunities already to have been missed. He played *va banque*. Nevertheless, he counselled war, and in decisive deliberations threw his vote into the scales in favour of an adventure, instead of advising moderation, as his duty now was, from the military point of view.

The disgraceful treatment of the dead Archduke, the omission of a ceremonial burial and of the princely visits, the suspicious speed with which Vienna slurred over the human side of the tragedy and pushed on with the political action, all these did grave injury to Austria. They deprive the campaign which followed of the character of a counter-blow in hot blood against a treacherous conspiracy and give it the stamp of a coldly calculated and long prepared action against a rising neighbour State.

The burial of the murdered Prince could have been a great moral demonstration for Austria, an occasion for the sympathetic homage of States and Monarchs for the 84-

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year-old Francis Joseph who was 'spared nothing', who had lost his brother, son, wife, and now his nephew and successor through tragic and violent means. Disputed though the person of Franz Ferdinand was, great as was the relief in certain circles abroad at the devolution of the succession upon the young Archduke Karl, nevertheless, in view of his cruel end, of his murdered wife, and of the magnitude and manner of the conspiracy, the world would have found it self-evident and right to show fellow-feeling and compassion for the Vienna Court at such a moment. But the world did not know that Franz Ferdinand's enemies at court were less ready to be reconciled than his enemies abroad.

The Emperor's Court Chamberlain, Prince Montenuovo, has not forgotten that the Archduke once, infuriated by some tactless act of the Prince, called him a bastard of the Imperial House. Even the old Emperor himself received the news of the murder, which was brought to him in the brooding noonday heat of June 28th, with mixed feelings. According to the evidence of his aide-de-camp Margutti he supported his head on his hands and remained silent for some long time, as if oblivious of everything about him. Then he said, as if to himself: 'The Almighty will not be trifled with; now He has restored that order which I was unable to maintain!' It was typical of the mentality of Francis Joseph, which was rooted deep in the Middle Ages, that the morganatic marriage of the heir to the throne with the Countess Chotek, which offended against the laws of the House of Habsburg, to him seemed sacrilegious and a provocation of God. In his eyes the murderer Gavriel Princip was in a certain sense the instrument of divine providence. Thus the Kaiser, as the bulletins announced, passed a quiet night after the day of the murder. And while

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the war party was already at work, while General Conrad, chief-of-staff of the entire armed forces, sounded the Ministers about their plans and proposed immediate mobilization against Serbia as the only possible answer, the court camarilla busied itself with the question, How should the Archduke be buried?

The Duchess of Hohenberg, *née* Countess Chotek, is refused equality of rank with the members of the Imperial House even in death. She must not rest in the vault beneath the Capucins Church, where, in rows and sometimes one on top of another, the earthly remains of imperial and arch-ducal glory putrefy in copper, tin and silver coffins blackened to insignificance. The heir to the throne had foreseen this likelihood, and had specified his castle at Artstetten on the Danube to be the last resting-place of himself and his adored wife.

But the Archduke was commander-in-chief of the army! Shall the army not give him the last escort? Shall he not be buried with all military honours? No. No volley, no military pomp. The office of the Court Chamberlain rules that no military funeral can be provided for the Countess Chotek. The commander-in-chief of the Imperial and Royal Army, General of Cavalry and Inspector-General of the armed forces is to be buried without the honours which are accorded to any corporal killed on duty.

In the late evening of July 2nd, the coffins arrived at the South Station in Vienna. The duty-free officers of the garrison are there. So is the new heir to the throne, the young Archduke Karl, who alone of those at court has protested against the indignity of this funeral. A few friends of the dead man are there, and many curious onlookers, such of Viennese society as are 'always there' and seek to

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appear important. The 'Upper Ten', the cream of the Viennese nobility of money and the stock exchange, the newspaper barons and the new-rich from Budapest and Lemberg take revenge for the exclusiveness of the dead man in life by especial obtrusiveness at his bier. The brief lying-in-state in the black-draped waiting-room of the station has been thought out by Montenuovo as a well-calculated demonstration of the sacrosanct court ceremonial: the Duchess's coffin is smaller than that of the Archduke, it rests on a lower step, and as the only sign of rank lie at the feet of the dead wife of the heir to the throne those gloves and fan which are the emblem of the Imperial ladies-in-waiting; for the Duchess of Hohenberg was before her marriage to Franz Ferdinand d'Este a lady-in-waiting of the Archduchess Isabella at the palace of the Archduke Friedrich in Pressburg (Bratislava).

During the night the funeral procession sets out. Without music, without pomp, without torches it goes through Vienna. At the beginning of the Mariahilferstrasse there is a painful scene. The high aristocracy of Bohemia, many of its members related to the Duchess and through this marriage kin to the heir to the throne himself, have appeared in a body and demonstratively fall in behind the procession. Prince Montenuovo protests to Count Adalbert Sternberg, a notorious *enfant terrible* of noble drawing-rooms and of the Vienna Parliament, who is at the head of the demonstration. Sternberg threatens the Court Chamberlain with a box on the ears in the open street. Even the handwritten Imperial testimonial to Montenuovo, which is published in the Press, cannot erase the impression left by this fracas during the funeral procession.

'I'll bring you the bodies as far as the West Station, then

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look after them yourselves', Montenuovo has told the officials of the Archducal Court. And thus the Burial Institution of the Vienna Municipality takes charge of the funeral at the West Station. At the little station of Pöchlarn on the Danube, where the coffins are unloaded, the local clergy, the local associations and the peasants are waiting. Just as the coffins are being blessed a stupendous thunderstorm breaks over the scene. The veterans, the firemen, the brothers of the gymnastic association, the village notables in frock-coats and top-hats, the goodwives in their best clothes all throng into the little waiting-room, into the black-draped baggage-room where the ceremony is to be held. The atmosphere is appallingly close. The people become thirsty, there is no holding them. Mine host of the station bar must pour beer for them and sell them sausages. There is laughter, and prosit-ing, and gossip. From the coffins, round which the mourners stand, tightly packed together, can be seen and heard, through the open door of the waiting-room, the throng of sweating, shouting, grumbling and guzzling people.

The thunderstorm goes on and on. In the streaming rain, under a heaven incessantly illuminated by lightning, to the noise of rolling thunder that sounds like the prelude to endless battles, the coffins, on a hearse, are brought on to the Danube ferry. Here is the romantic country of the Nibelungen, of Rüdiger von Bechlarn (Pöchlarn), of Hagen and Kriemhilde. The ferry moves out from the shore into the swiftly-running Danube. A flash of lightning startles the horses, they rear and slip and fall, the hearse wobbles and lists, the coffins seem about to plunge into the Danube. With great difficulty they are held.

At last, as the thunderstorm abates and morning dawns,

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the dead pair come to rest in the chapel of the castle at Artstetten. It is July 3rd. A dark and fatal day for Austria. Forty-eight years before, on this day, the battle of Königgrätz was fought and lost for Austria.

CHAPTER III

CONSPIRATORS AND DIPLOMATS

HISTORY, retrospectively regarded, could easily be presented as a logically built-up system of decisions, purposeful actions, and far-sighted plans, as a game of chess played, move by move, by skilful players. But history as a living process is at once much more complicated and much simpler. The plans and decisions of the protagonists, considered from close at hand, present mostly a confused medley, which first receive from the consequence a certain meaning, and the motives of these protagonists are at once more primitive, pettier and more human than the subsequent observer would have them be.

Austrian diplomacy in the summer of 1914, as the Sarajevo murder destroyed the summer calm, was in a blind alley. Everything had gone wrong in the preceding years. Serbia had doubled itself in strength and size and had found by way of Montenegro its way to the Adriatic, although a world war had been nearly fought to deny the Serbs an Adriatic harbour. Bulgaria and Turkey were defeated and weakened, the friendship of Rumania had been thrown away through an ambiguous and Bulgarophile policy, relations with Italy were bad, with Russia even worse after the eternal mobilizations and friction of late years, Germany had in 1912 laid strong emphasis on her lack of interest in the Balkans and strictly refused to collaborate as far as the risk of war. The more obvious idea of first carrying out the necessary reforms within the Monarchy, of giving

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breathing-space to the subject nationalities, and then, inwardly strengthened, of pursuing a more active foreign policy, did not occur to the Ballhausplatz. Instead of that, energy was expended on long memoranda for Berlin. The desire was to 'clarify' the situation in the Balkans, especially, by way of Berlin, to exert pressure on Bucharest, which was to be given the choice of an open alliance or enmity, and to draw Bulgaria and Turkey nearer to the Triple Alliance. Such plans do not show much in the way of ideas, but more was not to be squeezed out of the brains of Count Berchtold and his advisers.

The memorandum is ready as the shots of Sarajevo are fired. Now all this has suddenly become monstrously topical! Now the demand for vigorous action against Serbia can be woven into it and the *ballon d'essai* launched Berlinward. On July 5th Conrad is with Francis Joseph, on July 6th with Berchtold. On July 7th there is a Cabinet Council, at which Conrad again argues in favour of war and the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza against it. Berchtold and Count Hoyos inform the Cabinet that a free hand has been obtained from Berlin.

What had happened? On July 5th and 6th Count Hoyos was in Berlin and handed over the memorandum. On July 5th the Austrian Ambassador, Count Szögenyi, lunched with Kaiser Wilhelm. But at this meeting and at later ones in which Bethmann-Hollweg took part, the discussion was not so much about the memorandum as about the warlike intention of which Wilhelm knew from the reports of his Ambassador, or perhaps from talks with the military attaché and adjutant-general.

The German Ambassador in Vienna, a Saxon named Tschirschky, had immediately after the murder begun, as

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for years past, to brake and damp down. But Wilhelm II now saw the situation differently from 1912. A prince had been murdered. His whole conception of kingship by divine right was wounded. This was no question of the miserable Balkans, but of knightly vengeance. The whole romanticism of the Kaiser is awakened, he lives once more in the fantastic world of Wagnerian gods and heroes, he does not see political realities but the necessity that blood should be paid in blood. So he writes juicy marginal comments on the reports of the unfortunate Tschirschky, rebukes him for braking, agrees that the Serbian 'rabble' should now learn sharp retribution. When questions of honour are at stake the Kaiser loses all circumspection. A man like him, who is at bottom weak and continually poses as strong, is over-sensitive to the reproach of weakness or cowardice. For long he has thought to hear in the utterances of the Austrians this reproach of weakness. In the present moment, when a murdered friend has to be avenged, complaisance would be criminal. Thus the rebukes to Tschirschky, thus the declarations to the Austrians, which are the more striking in that the Kaiser actually opposes the content of the memorandum. He is neither for a drastic diplomatic move against Rumania nor does he wish to hear anything of Bulgarian friendship. Thus the whole intervention was against the official programme and yet in the spirit of the Austrian memorandum. Vienna had presented a memorandum which asked for a new Balkan policy and to that end the support of Berlin. Wilhelm hardly reads the memorandum, but cannot find any liking for its ideas.

Simultaneously, Vienna had a plan to undertake something against Serbia, but did not venture to ask Wilhelm

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straight out for warlike support. Wilhelm, however, is of his own accord ready to support a 'punitive action' against the murderers, and Hoyos is able to report this readiness to the Cabinet Council of July 7th as a fact.

Against the murderers? But who were then these murderers, where were their instigators, who had prompted the murder?

In Sarajevo an investigation is in progress, conscientiously conducted by the emissary of Vienna, Herr von Wiesner (later leader of the Austrian legitimists). But simultaneously other investigations are getting under way. After the horse has gone, everybody is ready to get to the bottom of causes, to establish faults and omissions. Half as much ardour before June 28th might have avoided the murder. Governor Potiorek, whose negligence was one of the main causes of the success of the outrage, has every reason to divert attention from himself. He is investigating on his own and telegraphs to Conrad that Wiesner considers the cognizance or complicity of the Serbian Government out of the question, whereas he, Potiorek, has reason to believe that the Serbian Government staged the outrage. Military authorities, newspaper-men and political organs now interfere on all sides in the investigation.

By the middle of July the following has been approximately ascertained:

The conspiracy which had such terrible results on Vidovdan has two roots. The one lies in Bosnia itself, the other in Serbia. Links were forged between the two and at the last the conspirators worked hand-in-hand. In Bosnia they were members of the Mlada Bosna, of the Young Bosnian organization, a Great Serbian, irredentist and extremist league composed mainly of immature youths

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and the half-educated: students, village teachers, book printers, Serbian priests' sons. This class of eternally restless small burghers is here as in Galicia or in Trentino the stronghold of irredentism, while the peasants, the handicraftsmen and the industrial workers on the whole will have nothing to do with this always aggressive, eternally aggrieved and restless nationalism. (This organization is, even in its name, 'Young Bosnia', a copy of the Carbonari and of the 'Young Italy' of Mazzini, and also a forerunner of the German secret organizations which sprang into being after the world war of 1914-18.) The path these people tread is always the same. They are at first Anarchists or very extreme Socialists, are then 'converted' to Nationalism, and produce remarkable Messianic ideas, which allot to their own people dramatic eras of martyrdom, resurrection and salvation, which worship and idolize the national idea, and charge the harmless nationalism of associations and parties with the dynamite of anarchist readiness-for-action. Even Pashitch, the Cavour of Yugoslavia, has trodden this path, though he certainly passed beyond the stage of nationalist conspiracy to that of constructive politics. But most such men do not get so far. Of their kind were also the conspirators against Franz Ferdinand, immature, ailing youths, who sought in Nationalism the cure for their religious shortcomings, who wished in a godless world to set up the idols of 'the Nation' and went forth to find blood sacrifices for their gods. A few years before the war a young Bosnian, Zerajhitch, shot at the Provincial Commandant, Varesanin, missed him, and committed suicide. Shots were fired in the Croatian Provincial Parliament. At Zerajhitch's grave, Gavriel Princip had sworn vengeance and pledged himself to achieve great deeds. 'Great deeds'—

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that meant murder. As the young Bosnians heard that the Archduke was coming to Bosnia, whom the Great Serb agitators had portrayed to them as the arch-enemy of Yugoslav unity, as the protector of Croat separatism, they decided at once to kill him. But they had no means. That was where and why the link with the Belgrade conspiracy was forged.

The Austrian investigation was never able to get to the bottom of the Serbian conspiracy. It groped about in the dark and exposed itself to refutation, because it knew too little about Serbian conditions and continually laid the guilt for the conspiracy on the Narodna Obrana, which was admittedly a Nationalist organization, but a legal one which did not deal in murder. Later research has clarified the picture of the conspiracy of 1914.

On May 29th, 1903 (June 12th by the Gregorian reckoning), Serbian officer conspirators under the leadership of the later General Zhivkovitch, who under Alexander I was in recent years Prime Minister and Dictator of Yugoslavia, fell upon their King Alexander Obrenovitch and his Queen Draga, *née* Masin, in Belgrade Palace, literally slaughtered them and chopped them to pieces, and threw the mutilated bodies naked into the courtyard. The head of the older Serb Royal House, Peter Karageorgvitch, was summoned to Serbia as King. Serbia became democratic and the conspirators of 1903 now played the leading part. But they then split into two groups, into a wing under Zhivkovitch which had become tame and now was uppermost, and an extreme group which wished to keep to the old methods and continued to pursue hidden aims. This was the organization 'Unity or death', popularly known as The Black Hand. Its soul was Major Dragutin Dimitrie-

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vitch, called 'Apis' (the Bee). Disorders and outrages in Macedonia, and in Bosnia, the intimidation of all conciliators, all Ministers they held to be too lax, even of the King himself, these were the methods of The Black Hand. After the Balkan wars these conspirators engaged in a violent struggle with the Prime Minister Pashitch. He wished to gain a few years of quiet for Serbia, to consolidate the expanded State; Apis wished to continue the struggle, and after Turkey to take aim immediately at Austria. Pashitch wished to strengthen the peasant democracy, The Black Hand desired that the officers, the 'heroes' of 1903 and 1912-13, should govern the State.

Against Franz Ferdinand the conspirators had long projected an attempt. As they heard of his visit they decided to organize one. Through a police spy, Ciganovitch, connection was established with the young Bosnians, who lived in Belgrade in a kind of voluntary exile. There was the typographer Chabrinowitch, employed in the State Printing Works, where he had once been presented to the Prince-Regent Alexander. There was the student Princip, and several others. Chabrinowitch and Princip were tuberculous, certain death sat in their bones and lungs, and with the consuming passion of the mortally ill they desired from life one grand tribute. Only a 'national deed' could now give their lives meaning. Both were enlisted in The Black Hand, sworn in by Dimitrievitch, equipped with bombs and pistols from the Royal Serbian Arsenal by Major Tankoshitch, and trained at the military shooting range in Topcider in shooting and the throwing of hand grenades.

The Black Hand had influential relationships, the network of its organization spread over the whole land. Dimitrie-

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vitch planned a 'tunnel' through which the armed conspirators made their way to Bosnia. The tunnel consisted of relay-posts, each of them manned by members of The Black Hand, who received the travellers as they came, gave them quarters and food, and passed them on. As there were Serbian frontier officials among these men, the youngsters were able to cross the closely watched frontier on the Drina; in Bosnia they were received by other emissaries of The Black Hand and brought in touch with the conspirators of the Mlada Bosna organization, who in any case knew them from earlier days.

Pashitch learned of Apis's undertaking. It did not suit his book. He gave orders for the arrest of the young conspirators. Reply came that they had already crossed the frontier. He had a warning given in Vienna, a soft warning, a very soft, even a strikingly soft warning. For the rest he waited on events, and was shocked, but not surprised, as he learned of the result on June 28th.

So far, everything is clear, but beyond this point much has remained hidden. A Serbian deputy in the Croat Diet, Svetozar Pribichevitch — later well known as an enemy of the Belgrade Dictatorship of the years 1929 and after — on the day of the murder received a telegram: 'Both horses sold at good prices'. This related obviously to the murder. Was Pribichevitch, were other Serb politicians in the plot? This has never been precisely learned. The murderers declared that a Freemasons' Conference had condemned Franz Ferdinand to death. One of the conspirators had beyond doubt connections in South France, and travelled from there to Sarajevo. But had the Freemasons their hand in the game, or was this a foreign outpost of The Black Hand? The Russian military attaché in Belgrade, Artamanoff, is

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said to have known of the plan and to have inquired in St. Petersburg whether it was approved there. It has never become known who in St. Petersburg was involved in the conspiracy, or how far The Black Hand enjoyed the support of Russian official quarters. A London newspaper published soon after the murder the text of a document, or rather the scrap of a document, found during the removal of the Serbian Legation, which took place about that time. It was in Spaniole¹ and contained, among mysterious allusions, the letters FF. Spaniole is much spoken in Belgrade, particularly among conspirators. Was the military attaché of the Serbian Government in London, or another official of the Legation, a member of The Black Hand?

The Austrian Government of 1914 knew much less than we know today. It had two reasonable courses of action: either, as Conrad wished, to act quickly, take something as security for the success of negotiations, and leave the rest to the Powers; or carefully to gather and supplement its evidence to the point of proof, and then to put this before the Governments, by this means creating a strong moral position for itself, from which an alteration of its Balkan policy would possibly have been easier to achieve.

Count Berchtold did something different. He answered the conspiracy of the murderers with the conspiracy of the diplomats.

His aim was war, but he wanted to contrive this so skilfully that it should look like a provocation of Austria by Serbia. He decided, in connection with the murder, to make demands upon Serbia which Serbia would reject. He did not want the acceptance of the demands. He wanted

¹ A Spanish-derived dialect introduced to the Balkans by Spaniole Jews who migrated there from Spain centuries ago.

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their refusal and war. To this end had he sent Hoyos to Berlin and there obtained a surprisingly favourable answer, for which, it is true, his diplomatic skill was less responsible than the resentment of Wilhelm II. With the German blank cheque in his pocket he sat down to play roulette.

Francis Joseph had yielded when he heard that Berlin supported the undertaking, even approved and wished it. He now feared to lose weight and value as an ally if he were weak. The Austrian Prime Minister Count Stürgkh was at one with Conrad and Berchtold. Only Tisza was against.

It is not known what changed Tisza's mind and made him, too, round about July 15th, inclined towards war. Apparently he too fell under the influence of the suggestion contained in the attitude of Berlin, in the strong words of the Kaiser, the encouraging speeches of the Secretary of State, von Jagow. It was Hungarian tradition to feel that Hungary was the real champion, within the Dual Monarchy, of the idea of the Triple Alliance, the real friend and partner of Berlin. For Andrassy, the Hungarian, had founded the Triple Alliance, after he had upset Vienna's policy of revenge against Prussia. Stephen Tisza, who despite Parliament and the thousand-year-old Hungarian 'liberties' was a dictator in his country, attached especial importance to the friendship of Berlin. He felt himself, and not without cause, inwardly akin to the Prussians, he saw his kingdom as the cell of 'Order' in the Dual Monarchy, as Prussia was the cell of 'Order' in the Reich, and he probably realized that in their social structure — Junker rule and a class electoral system in both States — the two countries had much in common. He was also particularly sensitive when reports from Berlin spoke of Germany's desire for a strong gesture from her ally, for a sign of life from the

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Monarchy. Tisza made only one condition: no Serbian territory must be annexed. In his view, the Monarchy already had more than enough Slavs. If a quarter of Serbia were absorbed in addition, the South Slav State within the Habsburg Reich could no longer be averted. But to the Great-Magyar Tisza anything appeared more tolerable than a Federalism which would put the South Slavs on the same plane and alongside the Magyars; while to the Calvinist Tisza, who jealously watched that the Catholic magnates, the high aristocracy and the Episcopate should whittle away nothing of the privileges of the Protestant Junker class, the 'Gentry', the Catholic Croats were more repugnant than all other Slavs, because they had old historical claims, old rights and an old culture, and could not be dismissed with a word like the Slovaks and Ruthenes, in respect of whom the point of view of the Hungarian ruling class had been reduced to the formula: 'The Slav is not a human being.'

No increase of Slav power, then, no increase of the Croat influence! The Hungarian Prime Minister agrees to the ultimatum to Serbia under the condition that no Serbian territory shall be annexed.

And now comes a question which at that time was raised by Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in London, alone among the diplomats of the Central Powers: 'Then what *does* Austria want?'

Well, the Ballhausplatz did not know that itself. Just as little as the predecessors of Berchtold, Hoyos and Forgach knew what they wanted in the spring of 1859; when they addressed an ultimatum to Sardinia and, without being armed, without having a definite solution or a plan for the solution of the Italian question in their minds,

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brought about the war with France. Conrad imagined that Serbia could be partitioned between Bulgaria and Greece. What remained would then submit to the orders of Vienna. That was patent nonsense. Berchtold vaguely envisaged a 'chastisement' of Serbia, such an undertaking as was possibly usual in the colonies, when in punishment of an act of violence or indiscipline British or Dutch or French troops burned down villages, ravished women, and confiscated cattle. A European State, the representative of a national-revolutionary movement of historical importance, however repugnant and disquieting the activities of this nationalism may be, cannot be 'chastised' in such a manner. The annexation of Serbia and the foundation of a South Slav Reich under the Habsburg sceptre — that might possibly have been an aim, a policy. But against that was Tisza's veto, and Conrad did not want it either, and it lay outside the feudal conceptions of Count Berchtold, and finally, they were too weak to try it. This opportunity had been missed twenty, or even fifteen years before.

They did not know what they wanted. Vienna did not know, Berlin did not hear, and was not curious. And just as Kaiser Wilhelm, about this time, put out to sea on board the *Hohenzollern*, without a destination, a tourist northward bound on an adventurous cruise into the unknown, so did the diplomats of Vienna and Berlin set forth, without an aim, without an idea, on their political journey into the unknown. They finished in a sea of blood.

CHAPTER IV

EUROPEAN CONCERT

(July 1914)

THE sextet of Great Powers is in a painful situation by the middle of July. The heat is oppressive and everybody would like to have an interval, to lay aside the instruments, take a holiday, postpone the performance until the autumn. But no one quite ventures to announce that interval, to suggest a breather. All stand about, first on one leg and then on the other, tuning violins and viols, playing a bar or two, and then putting them down. There seems still to be some item or other on the programme. Questioningly each looks at his neighbour. Will not the second violin, at his black-yellow Viennese music stand, suggest something? Has he not a surprise, some particularly jolly piece ready to play? No, Count Berchtold is whispering and confabulating with the first violin Jagow, but seemingly he cannot make up his mind. Perhaps the 'cellist with the French tricolour will give us something? Perhaps a duet with the bass viol player from St. Petersburg, who is so promisingly manœuvring his mighty instrument into position?

No, nothing but a few notes — the Marseillaise and the Russian national anthem.

The Austrians are withholding their ultimatum. They do not want to send it until the meeting in St. Petersburg between Poincaré and the Tsar is over. They do not want it to burst like a bomb into the warlike atmosphere which

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without doubt will prevail when Marianne and the Russian cossack get up to dance together. Although London has already been forewarned of an 'action', although the newspapers are writing a great deal and in the Parliaments interrogations and debates are going on, the pretence of normal conditions is kept up. Kaiser Wilhelm is cruising in the north, Francis Joseph is at Ischl, Moltke in Karlsbad, the Serb chief-of-staff Putnik is even at an Austrian spa, Bethmann is in Hohenfinow, Jagow has interpolated a short honeymoon trip, Grey yearns for his fishing, Poincaré and Viviani go aboard the *France* to steam by way of the Baltic to St. Petersburg, which of all the capitals is likely to have the most agreeable climate in these July days, though the political thermometer there shows a very high temperature.

The *France* comes into harbour in perfect weather, welcomed by the guns of Kronstadt. Festivity now follows festivity, the Russian Court, the most brilliant in the world, once more shows all its barbaric splendour — perhaps in a dull foreboding that this is to be the last time. An impressive picture is to be offered to these Frenchmen, these Republicans, these Jacobins and Socialists (the finer distinctions count for little in the eyes of the Russian Ministers and generals). The line of regiments is endless at the reviews. In gorgeous uniforms the troops and squadrons of the horse guards flash by. Scarlet Cossacks of the Guard, wild and fear-inspiring giants, escort the gala carriages in which Poincaré and the ex-Socialist Viviani sit. Sasonoff, the Tsar's Foreign Minister, says maliciously to M. Paléologue, the Ambassador of the Third Republic, in allusion to these red Cossack uniforms, 'I believe this colour is not altogether unsympathetic to M. Viviani.'

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'No, it is not altogether unsympathetic to him, but his artist's eye only appreciates it when it is associated with the blue and white.'

The dry attorney from Lorraine, Raymond Poincaré, who knows no other passion than his ambition and his policy, who serves his hatred, suns himself in the splendour of the Tsar's court, but he, too, tries to impress the Russians. He delivers great orations, speaks his mind, holds receptions like a prince of the blood, reproves the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador and openly threatens him: 'Serbia has powerful friends and Russia has an ally.' At the great review 60,000 march past before the President. This is more than twice as many as Austria has mustered for the Bosnian manœuvres, which according to the Russian version were a dangerous warlike gesture!

In the garden of Zarskoje Selo — the summer, here in the north, still has the virgin splendour of the young year — the guests and the court society are received by the Generalissimo, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaievitch. The tables are spread beneath great marquees. Paléologue tells how the 'two Montenegrins', the Grand Duchesses Anastasia and Militza, the first the wife of the Generalissimo, receive him with Balkan extravagance, and almost drown him in a torrent of words: 'Do you know that we are passing through historical and even sacred days? Tomorrow the military bands will play only the Lorraine March and the Sambre et Meuse! I have had a telegram from my father in a code we had agreed on. He tells me that war will break out before the end of the month . . . Oh, isn't my father a hero! He is worthy of the Iliad.'

The Homeric hero is 'King' Nikita of Montenegro, one of the most cunning rascals of the Balkan world. Kept for

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decades both by Vienna and St. Petersburg, he intrigues and has a finger in every pie, mixes the cards continually, and is ever out for his own profit in cash. In 1912, when the Powers were still mediating between Turkey and the Balkan States, he speculated on war and, in order to make sure of his stock exchange profit, simply moved his army on to Turkish soil. When he foretells war, one may be sure that he will find a means to make war.

During the banquet the 'Montenegrins' continue their prophecies: 'War will come . . . Nothing will be left of Austria . . . You will recover Alsace and Lorraine . . . Our armies will meet in Berlin . . . Germany will be destroyed!'

That does not sound like peace. And the things that are discussed during these days between Viviani, Sasanoff, Paléologue, the Tsar and the Grand Dukes sound little better even in the carefully modulated French reports. Petersburg was resolved to profit by every false step of Austria to bring about the long-desired war, and Poincaré was ready to play. If Austria would be content with demanding from the Serbs a new humiliation like that of 1909, the matter could be left at that, for consideration for England alone demanded that the Sarajevo murder should not be too openly condoned. But if Austria should go further than that, the blow would be delivered.

The policy of St. Petersburg, after the unfortunate adventure in the Far East, had turned again, and with renewed strength, towards historic aims: the Straits, Constantinople (the Zarigrad, or Kaiserburg, of Russian orthodoxy), the outlet to the warm seas. The Russian Army had been powerfully equipped by French money. Now, in 1914, there are nearly a million and a half men under arms. For months 'trial mobilizations' have been

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bringing this mass of men nearer and nearer to the West Front and have made them ready for action. Months will not now be needed for the 'Steamroller' to get under way, within a few weeks forty army corps will be able to mass themselves before the Carpathian passes and the lower Vistula. The Russian railways have been developed by French capital, the armaments industry has been feverishly expanded. It is not yet capable of supplying an army of three or four million men in the field with weapons and munitions in war. But it is hoped that the first offensive will open the way through Budapest to Trieste and Salonika and make possible a Franco-British base in the Mediterranean. In 1909 Russia was still too weak to strike. In 1912-13, when the Balkan States were sent forward against the Turks and next against the over-confident Bulgars, who themselves wished to reach out and grasp the Russian prize, Constantinople, the ardour of the Slav peoples was by this fratricidal war damped down, with Rumanian and Greek assistance; at that time Russia might have struck, but France was not then ready to go with her. It is good, this time, that the French are to hand, that in the atmosphere of champagne, martial music, rifles, bayonets, pikes and sabres, the toasts, the compliments and the promises of undying loyalty automatically take on a metallic, clinking sound.

Did the Russian war party inspire the murder as a deliberate act of provocation? Did threads lead, over the heads of the Serbian Government, from Petersburg to Belgrade and Sarajevo? The part played by the Russian military attaché Artamanoff has never been quite explained. At all events, there was in St. Petersburg a party which welcomed the murder and its inevitable consequences as a

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means of driving the Tsar into war, a party which saw in war not only the possibility of repairing the harm done by Mukden and Tsushima and opening a way to the Mediterranean for Russia, but also the surest means of mastering domestic difficulties which were becoming ever greater. A new wave of strikes was breaking over Russia; even the Duma, that tame mock-parliament, was still restive; Little Father Rasputin had been wounded by some fanatic of a woman; trouble reared its head on all sides. Since the murder of Stolypin and the graceless dismissal of Witte Russia had had no statesman who was capable of banishing the spectre of revolution by domestic reforms. War seemed the best way out. If France said 'Yes', it should be tried. True, the sphinx London still remained. But in the last resort Paris would be able to carry London with her.

The unconditional support of the French ally was as necessary for Russia as the 'Nibelungentreue' of the Berlin Wilhelmstrasse for Vienna. In the European crises of preceding years France had always pursued an honourable and selfless policy of peace. In 1905 Delcassé had been dropped and help given in the accommodation of the Morocco dispute—from the astute consideration, it is true, that Russia was prostrate and that France would have to bear the full impact of the German thrust, while the Britons, safe on their island, might well counsel France to be adamant. But in any case France had not only served France, but also the cause of world peace. When, in 1908, British policy and the London Press sought to make out of the annexation of Bosnia a treaty breach and a cause of war, Paris had damped down the rising tempers and built a bridge to Vienna. When, in 1911, the threats of war,

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answered by return of post, coursed to and fro between London and Berlin, and England wished to take advantage of the *Panther's* leap to Agadir to settle her reckoning with Germany, France, again, put the brake on, mediated, and made a compromise possible. The Cabinet of Caillaux and de Selves was decried as defeatist. A wave of Nationalism set in again, purposefully guided by the Russian Embassy. For in that Embassy sat M. Isvolski, foaming with hatred of Vienna, of Aehrenthal (the 'Bohemian Jew', as he called that Austrian Foreign Minister), by whom he felt himself to have been duped in 1908, whose success in the Bosnian affair he, Isvolski, had had to pay for with his resignation from the Russian Foreign Office. Since that day, Isvolski knows only one aim: to pay Austria out for the little matter of 1908-9. He is the most active and most dangerous agent of the Russian war party in the west. Through his hand much of the money which France lends the Russians to expand their railway network goes back into French pockets. The great Paris newspapers by this roundabout method recover the money which the small French investor has entrusted to the French banks, which the French banks have lent to Russia.

The nationalist campaign is successful. The cabinet of Poincaré comes. Three-year-military-service comes, and its enemies are shouted down in the Paris Chamber: *A bas les Prussiens!* Now, in 1914, we are no longer too weak, as we were in 1912, to risk war. We have nearly as many men under arms as Germany. We will forestall her. Now that General Michel, whose farseeing eye has perceived the danger of the Schlieffen Plan and who demanded the concentration of reserves around Amiens, has been relegated and Joffre has been summoned, we no longer think of a

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defensive. As soon as the Prussian strikes the Army of Alsace will prove the new offensive spirit of France in front of Strasbourg, the Army of Lorraine in front of Metz and on the Nied. The vengeful, tenacious and purposeful Poincaré becomes President. The doctrinal shortsightedness of the Socialists helped him into the saddle. True, they shout 'Poincaré — la Guerre!' but they refuse his opponent, Pam, their votes. History repeats itself; in precisely the same way will the German Communists, in 1925, through their candidate Thälmann, ensure that the candidate of the Weimar Coalition, Marx, shall be beaten by Hindenburg! Poincaré as President — that means, for Isvolski, a battle won. He is not mistaken. When, at the end of 1913, a dispute breaks out between Petersburg and Berlin because the German general Liman von Sanders, in the Turkish service, is to become Corps Commandant in Constantinople, Paris gives the Russians power of attorney. Even if war should come on account of this trifle, France will be there!

An onslaught, a clear breach of the peace — no, not even the France of Poincaré and the renegade Socialist Viviani will go to that length. In Petersburg Paléologue admonishes: 'I implore you, in the first place, to exhaust all possibilities of a compromise! Do not forget that my government is a government of public opinion, that it can only effectively support you if it has public opinion behind it. And finally, do not forget English opinion!'

And indeed this is the thing that makes M. Poincaré rack his brains in these days — *l'opinion publique*, or in other words, M. Jaurés, the passionate apostle of understanding and adversary of all vengeful policies, and above all England, that is, Sir Edward Grey.

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London, in this summer, really does not desire war. Since the refusal by Berlin of the proffered alliance, since the beginning of German naval expansion, since the dangerous isolation of London at the Boer War, London has looked forward to a comprehensive settling of accounts with Berlin, But this reckoning-up does not mean, for London, unconditionally war. It might just as well mean a Triple Entente between London, Paris and Berlin, perhaps even a Quadruple Entente if Washington would come in; it might mean a Gentleman's Agreement, common disarmament, the division of the world into zones of influence. In 1905 and in 1908 and in 1911 everything had been ready for war, but even this provocation of the Germans might have been a form of pressure, for each time offers of compromise had followed. From 1912 on an agreement with Berlin would doubtless have been preferred.

The risk of war for England had in two respects increased. The German fleet was already very strong. On the other hand, the Triple Alliance was no longer dangerous enough to disturb the equilibrium of Europe. The Dual Alliance of Paris and Petersburg, with the Balkan States and an Italy which inclined more and more in this direction, might be more dangerous. London had not been happy in her experience of the Russian friendship. The Russian exploits in Persia had surpassed in barbarity that which the British public was prepared to overlook in a friend.

In London, as Ambassadors of the Central Powers, sit two high feudal gentlemen: Count Mensdorff for Austria, a kinsman of the British Royal House, Prince Lichnowsky for Germany. Lichnowsky is not only an Anglophil, but an Anglomaniac. He strives untiringly for an understanding. A colonial agreement is under way, parts of it are already

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drafted. If Germany would only agree at last to a naval agreement, the bridge would be built. Peace is more profitable than war. Not only the pacifist Norman Angell holds war to be 'a false reckoning'. The entire City wants nothing to do with this business. Sir Edward is trying hard, in these days, for the sake of his country and the world, to preserve the peace. He woos, mediates, tranquillizes, develops ideas and shapes them into proposals. But he knows quite well that in one event all will have been in vain — if Germany attacks France. In that event, his word has been pledged. Only in letters, almost a private letter, not in a treaty. But they engage him and a part of the Cabinet. And behind these letters stands more — the conviction of the greater number of English statesmen that the German advance on Paris would strike at England's sensitive flank. There remains public opinion. Public opinion in England, it is true, will be more difficult to convince than in France. Unless . . . yes, unless the Germans commit the really big blunder and invade Belgium. But Sir Edward, for the nonce, does not tell the Germans that, for he fears, by putting England's cards on the table, to bring about the very war he would avoid. But this false move becomes the decisive point in the next chapter of events. Here lies the 'guilt' of Sir Edward.

Let us make a brief excursion to Rome. Italy has long been moving inwardly away from her official allies. How shall she escape her obligation as an ally in case of war? The Marquis San Giuliano is in an even more precarious position than Grey. But the Central Powers, through their maladroitness, come to his aid, too. The Triple Alliance Treaty lays down that the Cabinets of Vienna and Rome must agree

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before any action is undertaken in the Balkans. Now, the Ballhausplatz knows that everything that one negotiates in confidence in Rome is reported in similar confidence to St. Petersburg. But Vienna does not wish to show its cards. Even Berlin was only allowed to see the contents of the ultimatum at the last moment, and was given no opportunity to exert an influence upon it. The Treaty? Oh, that! The jurists of the Ballhausplatz report that the dispute with Serbia is no 'Balkan undertaking'. That clause related to Turkey and to potential acquisitions of territory. This is certainly true of the meaning of the treaty. But formally, the treaty has been broken. The Marquis San Giuliano smells dinner cooking. He too knows that Vienna is up to something. He only fears, that he might be informed of it. He would much prefer that Rome should keep out of the game. Then Italy would from the start have the very best, contractual, black-and-white reason to step aside when the great duel between the Central Powers and the Dual Alliance begins. And if London should take the side of Paris and Petersburg, the issue is in any case settled for Italy, for she can and will not fight against England. So everything is going well for Rome, and the only question is, when shall Italy take the second step and march against her former ally. But there is time for that and the Marquis himself will not see the day anyway. His successor, Sidney Sonnino, will choose the moment when Italy, dissatisfied with the proffered Trentino and the coastal frontier districts, shall set her armies in movement against Tirol and the Isonzo.

In Serbia, Pashitch is preparing the elections. He does not allow himself to be disturbed. He too sees the calamity.

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coming. But he has the calm, the toughness, the iron nerves of a Serb peasant from the mountains. A vein of fatalism, a legacy of the Turkish period, runs through the old fox. He reckons quite rightly thus: If Austria only wants a gesture we will make it, no matter how humiliating. The settlement of accounts will come one day, in any case. But if Austria wants war, Russia is on our side.

One episode, in these days, darkens the horizon by yet another shadow. The Russian Minister in Belgrade, M. von Hartwig, the stage-manager of all Balkan intrigues and cross-currents, succumbs to a stroke. That in itself would have no political importance. But the fact that it happens in the drawing-room of the Austrian Minister, Baron Giesl, and at the end of a politically important conversation, makes it politically important. The uneasy conscience of the Serbs seeks assuagement. The perfectly innocent Giesl is openly accused in the Serbian press of having poisoned von Hartwig. This is one of the many symptoms which, with muffled rumblings, herald the impending eruption of the volcano.

CHAPTER V

THE AVALANCHE BREAKS LOOSE

HARD on each other's heels, like the superimposed pictures of some sensational film, the decisive scenes of the last July week flash before the eye even of the onlooker who contemplates them from a distance of more than two decades. Contemporary observers in 1914 obtained only a confused, distorted, meaningless picture. Living in deepest peace, feeling themselves hardly touched by the distant Balkan dispute, they found themselves suddenly drawn into the whirlpool of events. Flaring headlines in the newspapers; threatening and pathetic Notes; special editions; altered timetables; closed frontiers; cancelled holidays; calling-up notices; mobilization notices; manifestos to the people and to the peoples; military processions; soldiers in field-grey and field-green and horizon-blue in all the streets; patriotic songs and patriotic din; free fights; looting; broken shop-windows; brass plates torn down; spy mania; rumours which raced ahead of events and events which surpassed rumour — a week mad as the dream of a feverish invalid, as a glimpse of hell.

Before reason could return the calendar showed the 1st of August 1914. The World War began.

In the late afternoon of July 25th Nikola Pashtchi appeared in the house of the Austrian Legation in Belgrade. Baron Giesl is ready to leave, for the scene which follows is most superfluous. Both gentlemen know that the task

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of the diplomats is finished. In the middle of July, already, the k.u.k. Legation had sent its secret archives to Semlin, the Austrian frontier town just across the Danube. Today at noon the Belgrade Court has left the capital, and at three o'clock in the afternoon the mobilization order for the Serbian Army has been issued.

If Pashitch, for whom the war is untimely, still has a hope of peace, it is no longer founded on the possibility of direct negotiations with Vienna. He hands the Austrian the answer to the Austrian ultimatum, with its time-limit. It is a masterpiece of diplomatic response. 'A brilliant performance for forty-eight hours', writes Wilhelm II in the margin as he, belatedly, has it put before him. In forty-eight hours the Serbian Government has had to deliberate with the friendly diplomats, to weigh all the possibilities, consequences and loopholes, and to squeeze itself between the appearance of extreme compliance and the actual retention of all safeguards. It has succeeded. Tomorrow the Cabinets of Europe, and for many years to come historians and jurists will declare that Serbia accepted nine-tenths of the Viennese demands. In fact, it refused the essential ones, and as a sovereign State had to refuse them, because they would have meant the acceptance of the submission of the country to permanent Austrian control. On the other hand, the humble gestures did not help Vienna. The unbridgeable gap was that Vienna had from the start made unacceptable demands, that Vienna did not want any diplomatic guarantee but simply war. Acceptance of the entire ultimatum, a simple 'yes' from the Serbs would have placed Vienna in the greatest embarrassment. For that reason the pupils of Metternich had put fourteen days' work into the ultimatum. Too long for the world to be duped.

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Giesl has no time to read the Serbian reply right through. He quickly ascertains that the Serbs are evasive in this or that point. The answer — the breach of diplomatic relations — has already been prepared. He sends it across to Pashitch; distances are short in the little capital. Thirty-five minutes after Pashitch's visit Giesl and his staff are already sitting in their special train.

The telegraph hums between the European capitals. Coded messages, orders and admonitions fly from London to Berlin, from Berlin to Petersburg. Paris cables to the Russians that it supports their actions, Grey clutches like a drowning man at straws, Wilhelm thinks the decision is still in his hand, that he may yet give the Tsar to pause through persuasion and threat. The decision undoubtedly lies between London and Berlin. If Berlin utters a sharp word Vienna will yield. If London declares itself at one with Berlin, Petersburg will climb down.

Neither Berlin nor London wants war. But both have inhibitions, both are dilatory, both are too slow in their efforts to catch up with an avalanche that is already in movement. Vienna and Petersburg both want war, though with an important difference: Vienna wants a localized punitive undertaking against Serbia, for which it has mobilized eight Army Corps (twenty-three divisions). Vienna looks to Germany to prevent the major, the dangerous war. For that reason the general mobilization of the full forty-nine divisions of first-line and reserve troops is delayed, although trustworthy news has come from Russia that the 'preparatory war period' (secret mobilization) has been ordered on July 26th and the general mobilization on July 30th. The Austrian order for general mobilization follows only on July 31st.

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But the first partial mobilization order, for the undertaking against Serbia, is already being carried out, and in consequence that now happens which the Viennese call a *Pallarwatsch*.¹ That is to say, an entire army has to gather on the Save, in the south-east, there right-about-turn and journey back right across Hungary to the north, where it will arrive in Galicia too late for the decisive action.

In Petersburg, on the other hand, the great all-in war is desired. The military party burns to get it going as soon as possible. From the Tsar, who in these days is as passive, helpless, distrustful, and taciturn as ever, it extorts assent to the mobilization, in the full knowledge that this will set everything in movement, for Berlin, whose only chance in a war-on-two-fronts is the celerity of the German mobilization, will not quietly watch while Russia sets her gigantic army on the move. But the Tsar retracts the order. It is extorted from him a second time, and this time the chief-of-staff, into whose hand it is given, is advised to make himself scarce. With this torch in his hand General Januschkievitch withdraws beyond the reach of further orders from his Supreme Warlord. But no more countermanding orders come. The Tsar has finally yielded.

Berchtold's great anxiety still is lest somebody should interfere with his war, his little war against Serbia. He refuses to agree to a general conference or to appeal to the Hague Court. But Berlin urges a compromise more and more vigorously. The Wilhelmstrasse has seen the extent of the danger. It has observed that Russia is not giving way, that this time the situation is deadly serious. It would like now to hold Vienna back, prestige or no prestige. Wilhelm, too late, has read the Note lying in his drawer and written

¹ A word that expresses a good deal more than the English 'muddle'.

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on it: 'A great moral success for Vienna; but all reason for war now disappears! On the strength of this I would never have ordered mobilization.' Austria has not only mobilized — as indeed it had to do, since Serbia had mobilized six hours earlier — but Berchtold is in a hurry to go further. As Francis Joseph is comforting himself with the thought that the breach of diplomatic relations does not yet mean war, Berchtold wishes to compel a declaration of war also. On July 28th he lays before Francis Joseph a telegram from Temes-Kubin, a Hungarian hamlet on the Danube, saying that Serbian frontier troops had opened fire on Austrian soldiers. The latter had returned the fire, and there had been forty dead. By the side of the telegram Berchtold puts the declaration of war, which invokes the refusal of the ultimatum and the Serbian attack at Temes-Kubin. The eighty-four-year-old Francis Joseph once more considers what is at stake. Was he capable of envisaging the dimensions of the catastrophe? Had he any conception of war in the twentieth century? Sixty-six years earlier he had experienced his 'baptism of fire'. That was under Radetzky, at Santa Lucia, among the Veronese vineyards on the Etsch. The Austrians used muzzle-loaders, fought in columns, wore spotless white coats and tall, heavy parade shakos; blue-and-red hussars galloped across the fields; the regimental bands accompanied the advancing troops to within a few hundred steps of the enemy. That was a romantic time and a picturesque war. Francis Joseph often looked death in the face. In 1849 he was the first to ride over the burning bridge into Raab, desperately defended by his rebellious subjects, the Magyar Honveds. In 1859, as commander-in-chief of his army, he was under fire at Solferino and watched the charge of Napoleon III's guards. In 1866, true, he was not in the field. He only knows

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from hearsay the dreadful hours of Königgrätz, where his splendid army melted in the fire of the Prussian breechloader, where technique and calculated strategy defeated courage and dash. Some 500,000 men then stood under fire; it was the greatest battle of the century. Does Francis Joseph imagine that that engagement, which only lasted a single day, will be as different from coming battles as a medieval encounter from the battles of Napoleon? He can hardly grasp this. He only knows one thing, that the existence of the Empire is at stake. An old time Grand Seigneur, he sees the new century through the spectacles of an old-fashioned code of honour. 'If we go under,' he has told Conrad 'we will go under honourably.' And now he tells Berchtold that, as blood has been shed and the war begun, the declaration of war might as well be dispatched. He signs. His hand does not tremble. He is still vigorous, for all his eighty-four years. Berchtold takes the fateful paper. As it has in the meantime transpired that, although a few shots were fired at Kubin, nobody was killed — the world will never learn when and where in this war the first man was killed by enemy action — Count Berchtold crosses out the passage relating to this incident and sends off the declaration of war thus curtailed, without showing it to Francis Joseph again. As there is no direct wire to Belgrade it goes by way of Bucharest and Sofia to Nish. It arrives late and mutilated. It is already obsolete, for in the meantime fighting has really occurred and men have been killed.

Everything goes wrong with the declarations of war. On July 31st Wilhelm II proclaims a 'state of imminent war danger' and telegraphs to the Tsar that peace can only be saved if Russia ceases her military preparations. Nicholas

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answers that that is for technical reasons impossible. At half-past three in the afternoon a German ultimatum, with a twelve-hour time limit, is sent to Russia, demanding that the mobilization be stopped. It is only a matter of form. Berlin knows that Russia cannot draw back, but hopes to make it clear to England that Petersburg is making war inevitable. On August 1st the Secretaries of State, the Chancellor and a few officials are gathered in the Reich Chancery in the Wilhelmstrasse. They are wallowing in documents and books. The object of their conscientious search is to find a model for the declaration of war on Russia. At last one is found. In code it travels to the Ambassador in Petersburg, Count Pourtalès, a distinguished and agreeable but no longer very vigorous or live gentleman. He goes to Sasonoff. He inquires solemnly, with almost medieval formality, whether Russia stands by her preparations. As he receives no satisfactory answer he hands over the document. He weeps as he does this. He and the Russian embrace each other and both call on God and history to witness their innocence. Sasonoff quickly scans the document which had given its authors in Berlin such trouble and begins, in the middle of this sentimental scene, to grin maliciously. In Berlin two versions had been prepared, one each for the events that the Russian answer should be unsatisfactory or that there should be no answer at all. In copying the document both versions had been left standing, next to each other. The weeping count had not noticed this. He withdrew shamefaced. One hundred and fifty years of Prussian-Russian friendship were at an end.

Sir Edward stands between two fires. The calamity that war may bring is incalculable. England's public opinion

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does not want war. In 1905 and 1911 matters were different; then it was a matter of rebuffing German provocation in the Atlantic, or of the uneasiness felt in British minds about the dangers of German competition. Britons find it fair enough that Austria should demand some satisfaction from Serbia. The intervention of Russia wakens their suspicions. True, the rape of Serbia must not be tolerated, but it is the business of the Powers to prevent that, not of Russia alone. What may happen if Sir Edward is unable to arrest the rolling wheel is inconceivable. He knows very well the way to restrain the Russians. A definite declaration in Paris and Petersburg that London will not countenance a Russian intervention and a Note to Berlin that London will tolerate no attack on France but will remain neutral if Germany keeps quiet in the West — that would be peace. But Grey has given promises.

There is M. Cambon, who has been repeatedly assured, and in writing, that France will not stand alone. There is the Russian Benckendorf, who is pressing for the redemption of given words. And Petersburg and Paris can recall that London wished them to strike in 1909 and 1911. Sir Edward is in a most difficult situation. If he sides with Russia the Radicals and pacifists will begin shouting, if he stays neutral the Diehards will be at him. Winston Churchill will point out to him that a German victory over Russia would also endanger England's position in the world. For where will the Germans stop when they once begin to march east? Did not Napoleon seek to reach India by way of Moscow? The Germans in Batum and Baku, in Constantinople and Baghdad, on the Persian, Afghan and Indian frontiers! Who will then hinder Wilhelm from turning right-about and destroying France? The British fleet? Yes, if the German fleet were not so strong!

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In Berlin control passes into the hands of the generals. It is natural that they have to answer the Russian mobilization with a German mobilization. It is an unhappy indiscretion that the *Lokalanzeiger* announces the mobilization in a special edition before it has been proclaimed. There are enough of these minor mishaps in Berlin during these times, from the demonstrations of sympathy in front of the Italian Legation to the kissing and shoulder-carrying of Japanese in the street, under the impression that they will once more march against Russia. More difficult to explain is the declaration of war on Russia, since it was the German intention in any case to remain on the defensive in the east. Bethmann says he needs war with Russia because otherwise 'he could not gain over the Social Democrats'. The Reichstag and the speech which he is to make on August 4th — these are the things which obsess Bethmann. But the generals also need war with Russia to force France to show her hand. And the declaration of war on France, again, is needed on account of Belgium. They wish 'at a blow' to take Liège and to overrun the line of the Maas. But how can they demand the invasion of Belgium when they are not yet even at war with France? From such military considerations spring the diplomatic mistakes which had such grave consequences for Germany. Declaration of war against Russia, declaration of war against France — Grey's situation improves from hour to hour, for Germany is already clearly the aggressor — and now the invasion of Belgium, which only just before had been told that nothing would happen to neutral neighbours!

Lichnowsky in London fights a bitter battle. He lays Grey's words on the gold-balance, ignores the threats, registers the faintest friendly sound like a sensitive seismo-

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graph. He thinks he still sees a chance, if Germany does not attack in the west. He passes this hope on to Berlin. A ray of light in the darkness! Bethmann and the Kaiser breathe again. Right-about-turn! March eastward! England is to stay neutral. But Moltke is in despair. No, that won't do, that would mean the collapse of the mobilization, the end before a beginning has been made. Cast down, discouraged, weeping, Moltke withdraws. The Kaiser, once more awakened from his sleep, decides: 'Do what you like!' It is the first scene, or at all events the curtain raiser, of the tragi-comedy which is to find its end on November 9th, 1918 — 'Do what you like!'

On August 4th Bethmann stands before the Reichstag. He announces the rape of Belgian neutrality: 'Necessity knows no law.' It is his most difficult hour. But everything goes better than he expected. The Social Democrats have already decided not even to mention Belgium. In the waves of enthusiasm no critical voice can be heard.

On the same day England declares war. The German invasion of Belgium has removed all Sir Edward's difficulties. Now the reason for war is there: not for Serbia, not for Russia, but for Belgium, for the broken treaty, England will go to war. Public opinion swings round. Everybody is for war. Or nearly everybody. Its opponents, pacifists or sceptics, are here, too, no longer to be heard.

In France, too, tempers have changed. Jean Jaurès has fought to the last for the victory of reason. If the Prussians march against the Cossacks, well, let them fight it out between them, there should be no war among the civilized western peoples! He says: 'That is the work of the *canaille* Isvolski, at last he has his war.' He intends to go to the Quai

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d'Orsay, where the German Note has been for some hours. But now he is in the Café de la Croix. It is nine o'clock in the evening. Excited throngs fill the boulevards; will they cry 'To Berlin' or 'A bas la guerre'? A dark figure appears at the window where Jaurès sits. The shadow raises an arm. A flash and a bang and splintering glass. Jean Jaurès is no more. The avalanche thunders over his body, no power on earth can arrest it now.

Would Jaurès have arrested it? That is probably a pious illusion. But human society lives on such illusions, on the belief in ideals, in goodness, in peace. Jaurès's death was for that reason one full of meaning. This one man of millions, the doughtiest apostle of the message of peace, was spared the choice between faith and fatherland, between international and nation. His destiny it was to lead the mighty procession of the dead which is now for four and a half years to wind its way towards the underworld, that endless procession of nameless victims sacrificed on the altars of Honour, Prestige, Interest, Incompetence, Illusion, and of the entire unimaginative and irresponsible apparatus of a mechanized, atomized and over-civilized mankind.

CHAPTER VI

PRIDE AND FALL

THE laws of classic tragedy demand that the hero should behold himself once more in the splendour of fabulous good fortune before everything suddenly turns against him and his tragic downfall follows. Blinded by the gods that mean to destroy him, he believes that he holds all threads of destiny in his hand and on the summit of his intoxication he sees all dangers behind him. The effect which the poet achieves with his tragedy is the more overwhelming according to the speed with which the signs of approaching disaster gather round his hero, the rapidity with which he becomes aware of the turn in his affairs, the suddenness of the shock which prepares his mind for the catastrophic climax. The great dramatist history loves to follow these dramatic laws, to let loose his final act like an annihilating tempest out of a clear sky, to complete the tragic revolution in a matter of seconds.

Germany, in the summer of 1918, is ruled by General Ludendorff. Since the formation of the 'third supreme command' in the summer of 1916 the First Quartermaster-General has systematically, step by step, arrogated all power for himself. Since the strike in January 1918 he personally, independent of the Chancellor and the Secretaries of State, has controlled the system of military supervision over the provincial administration, and now there is no department of the life of the State which is not directly under the leadership of the Supreme Command. Foreign policy, war pro-

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duction, the distribution of foodstuffs, the conduct of operations on all fronts, the civil administration, domestic policy, staff questions, propaganda — everything passes through the hands of a man whose own Kaiser hates him like an evil nightmare, who speaks of him among intimates as the *Feldwebelfresse*.¹ Hans Delbrück, the creator of modern war-history, one of the finest critical minds of the Wilhelmine age, described Ludendorff in similar vein: 'a Napoleonic forehead above the jaw of a Prussian non-commissioned-officer.'

The Quartermaster-General has lost all sense of proportion since his 'railway advance' deep into Russia came to an end and the peace of Brest Litovsk was dictated to the Russians. It was his idea to send Lenin and Trotsky in sealed railway coaches through Germany to Russia, in order to undermine Kerensky. He drove Russia into the arms of Bolshevism. Now, in the midsummer of 1918, he has already revised the Peace of the spring. The supplementary treaties to the Peace of Brest Litovsk, these acts of naked robbery and brutal arrogance, have now taken from the Russians the Caucasus, all the Baltic Provinces, the Ukraine with the ore-deposits of the Don, Donetsk and Dnieper. The so-called Hetmann of the Ukraine, Herr Skoropadski, a figure for the 'Blue Bird' or the Petersburg ballet, is a man of straw propped up in front of the German Military Governor, who sits in Kieff and actually rules all the lands between the Dnieper and the Sea of Azov. In Finland German divisions are 'putting things in order' and General Headquarters is discussing whom to put on the Finnish throne. The Wettins and the Urachs of Württemberg are

¹ A word difficult to translate, which means a man with the manner and speech of a somewhat objectionable sergeant major.

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disputing about Lithuania; both want the new throne. Courland and Livonia are attached to Prussia through 'plebiscites' of the German Baltic barons. A German Governor dictates in Warsaw, while Pilsudski is a prisoner in the fortress at Magdeburg. Under the Peace of Bucharest Rumania has had to sell herself body and soul. Her oil and ores are confiscated for 99 years, her harvests for long to come; she has been disarmed and has had to hand over her frontier cities to Hungary, the Dobrudja to the united victors. The Bulgars are bitter about that, for they claim the Dobrudja, but their protest is vain; the German generals have the last word in Sofia as in Constantinople, on the Euphrates, in Macedonia. In the West Ludendorff, having vanquished the East, has gathered a mighty war-machine. With the hammer of his shock divisions and of his heavy guns he strikes against the Allied front, on the Somme, in Flanders, at Soissons, in the Chemin des Dames. The French centre south of the Aisne is torn wide open, Paris and the Marne lure once more. The next thrust is to take the Germans across the Marne and split the enemy's front completely in two. Rheims is to be outflanked and the French are to be forced to withdraw their reserves from Flanders. Behind the July offensive a new operation looms in Ludendorff's maniac brain: the resumption of the twin thrusts which were begun in the spring under the names of 'George' and 'Georgette', and his final aim, the destruction of the British between the Somme, the Channel and the Yser, draws ever nearer.

German soldiers are marching from Olberg to the Arctic, from the Neva to the Marne, from the Caucasus to the Vosges. German submarines are aprowl in the Atlantic; the Mediterranean, and the waters between England and

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the Murman coast. German princes are candidates for new thrones, at General Headquarters dice are thrown for states and peoples. German big business disposes over oilfields and ore-deposits, over the coalfields, grainlands of Central and Eastern Europe, Western Asia and continents still to be conquered. Through a starving land races the propaganda machine of the Fatherland Party, always producing new war aims. It has long since counted as defeatism to demand only Briey and Belgium. Marseilles, Calais, Tunis, Egypt, the Congo — the earth is too small for the beer-mug politicians who are dividing the world in Kottbus and Teltow, with the approval of General Headquarters, for the Quartermaster-General desires that the 'Home front shall be bucked up', that 'Bolshevism', which means hunger, war-weariness and the bleeding of the nation, shall be combated by propaganda, and he causes 'enlightenment' to be provided in the barracks, factories and schools by non-commissioned-officers.

There are men who will have nothing to do with this madness, who see the catastrophe behind such megalomania. Ludendorff knows how to deal with them. At this time the agitation is begun against Erzberger and Scheidemann which is to bear fruit later. Prince Lichnowsky, who has his own opinion about German policy and states it in a memorandum, is pilloried as a traitor. In the Reichstag the Secretary of State Kühlmann ventures to say that peace cannot be gained by weapons alone; he wishes to play ball with certain British statesmen who, in spite of the loud trumpeting of Lloyd George, would like to get down to negotiations, possibly General Smuts, for instance. Kühlmann has to go on July 8th. An admiral becomes Foreign Minister. The venerable Chancellor Herting has long been a shadow without power.

This is the climax.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICANS

ON July 15th the Germans attack on the Marne and near Rheims. The attack comes to a stop before the second and third French lines. On July 18th Foch's reserves, coming from the woods of Villers-Cotterets, fall upon the German flank. On the 19th the Germans begin to retreat from the Marne salient. The turning-point has come.

The short-sightedness of the political leaders of Germany about the strength of America now avenges itself. The American declaration of war had been derided: 'The Americans cannot fly and cannot swim, they will never reach France.'

But now they are coming, at first in a trickle; up to March 1918, as Marshal Foch states in his *Memoirs*, there were only five American divisions, with about 60,000 rifles, at the front. But in April alone 93,000 men landed in France, and this increased in May to 240,000 men.

The short-sightedness of the German Navy now avenges itself, whose responsible chief had pledged his word that unrestricted submarine warfare would not only ensure the starvation of England, but would also make the mass transport of American troops impossible.

At a conference in Abbeville on May 1st and 2nd the united military and naval staffs agreed that England should undertake the transport of 130,000 Americans in May and 150,000 in each of the months of June and July, in her own ships, and apart from this the entire American tonnage should be fully used.

No single troop transport was ever sunk by a German sub-

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marine; not a single American soldier was ever prevented by German arms from landing on French soil and marching to the front!

And the Generalissimo of the Allied Armies triumphantly remarks in his memorandum of July 24th, 1918, that from now on 'the enormous reserves of America will throw 250,000 men upon French soil each month'.

And what men!

The writer of these lines will never forget the deep impression made upon him when, on August 25th, 1918, he was first confronted by the Americans. With his battery and some infantrymen and machine gunners he was defending a canal crossing near Soissons. The little group, which had been retreating for days before an urgent and superior enemy, without receiving regular supplies of munitions and food, with no possibility of sending back the wounded and sick, clad in ragged uniforms, without mail, without proper communications with headquarters, or with the flanks, clung to this important bridge in order to delay the advance of the enemy (French colonial troops) and to gain time for the retreat of the main body. For some strange reason hours passed without a sight of the enemy. So the author, with an orderly, rode cautiously over the bridge into no-man's-land, a mile away.

Suddenly he saw at a bend in the forest road, about half a mile distant, endless marching columns of cheerful, singing soldiers in column of fours. They were brand new from head to toe, as if they were on some peacetime parade, fine young fellows. We had looked like that when we started out four years earlier, in the summer of 1914.

For the first time fear rose within me, fear that we should lose the war.

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What did it avail that our shells and machine-gun fire mowed down these careless lads in rows (just as we youngsters had been mown down in rows by the experienced Tommies in Flanders in 1914)? It was a human torrent so mighty and irresistible that we were bound to drown in it.

No German front-line soldier who had such an experience, who was able to compare the ragged, worn-out and exhausted figures of our diminishing army with the well-nourished, well-equipped, well-trained and well-rested lads of the ever-increasing American armies, could ever believe in the stupid fairy-tale of the 'stab-in-the-back'!

CHAPTER VIII

CRIPPLED LEADERSHIP

LUDENDORFF's offensive has failed. In these days he had to add up his accounts and strike a new balance. Slowly he forces himself to realize that the final victory of which he had dreamed is no longer possible. He advises the Kaiser that the army, in view of its heavy losses in men and arms and the declining moral of the troops, is no longer in a position to impose our will upon the enemy. This is after the great disaster suffered by the German Army, the tank-victory of the British at Amiens on August 8th. But Ludendorff and the General Field-Marshal Hindenburg draw no political lesson from this. True, at the Crown Council in Spa they demand that diplomacy should now intervene and launch a peace offensive, but they by no means yield free hand to the diplomats, the derided and disdained pen-pushers who, according to Prussian State doctrine, always ruin that which the sword has achieved. When the politicians press for the declaration about Belgium, which has been repeatedly refused to Bethmann-Hollweg and Kühlmann, which the Pope, Erzberger and the Kaiser of Austria have demanded, Hindenburg becomes suddenly stubborn again. The whole of Belgium really cannot be given up! Liège at least must be retained, in one way or another the bridges over the Maas must, through the possession of Liège, be secured for coming times. The seventy-one-year-old Field Marshal thinks less of peace than of 'the next war', the restoration of the normal human state of affairs, as it were, after a sickly interruption

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through a few lax years of peace. Even now, after the defeat of August 8th, even now, when the country is starving, the army is bled white, and allies are languishing, even now peace is the last anxiety of the Supreme Command; the preparation of 'the next war' is more important. For that reason Liège is still demanded. And in order to underline the demand the Old Gentleman, who in effect has in the past not bothered overmuch about military and strategic things, but has left such matters to his First Quartermaster-General, suddenly begins to play the strategist. He argues that a strategic defensive could still compel the enemy to make peace. This is in crass contradiction to the lesson which has been imparted to the German people for years from this quarter. In defiance of all opponents, all politicians, all warning voices, the doctrine was always proclaimed that the sword alone, and namely, the offensive, the final victory, and the crushing of the enemy, could bring peace. Against Falkenhayn's arguments these two had always objected that he was a strategist of attrition, he would never achieve the final victory. But now the enemy is to be worn out. A military defensive and a political peace offensive. But neither of these is seriously undertaken. A 'military defensive' — that would have meant the drastic shortening of the front, that the army should be withdrawn, with as few losses as possible, to positions prepared in the rear, that these positions should have been carefully expanded to a strong resistant line, that reserves should have been husbanded, that the possibilities of strategically useful counterblows should have been carefully considered. None of this happened. The Antwerp-Maas position was a line drawn on the map, there were in reality no trenches there, no batteries, no wire, no dug-outs. They could have been created. Between the

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Scheldt and the Rhine three great lines of resistance could still have been built.

Nothing was done. Whenever the Allies attacked every scrap of trench was defended with tremendous losses, men and material were sacrificed, then the line gave way to the pressure, was withdrawn a mile or so, and stood again. The German guns were worn out, new ones were not available. The German artillery lost irreplaceable equipment. The German battalions could no longer muster 500 men apiece, after three days of fighting they were often down to 300 and 200 men, to the strength of companies; the companies were burned-out slack; the divisions were no stronger than regiments of 1914, often weaker. The reinforcements consisted of boys and fifty-year-old men, often fathers and grandfathers, ailing, half-invalids. The uniforms were made of substitute materials, the boots were pieces of leather tied together with string, the leather equipment had given way to hempen substitutes. The men's rations, long inferior, were now small in quantity as well, and supplies could not be counted on. The Germans once stiffened the Austrian front by 'whalebones', by sending German divisions; now Hindenburg sends one telegram after another to Baden, asking General Arz to send him k.u.k. divisions to the western front. Arz actually sends a few divisions, but they are drops that melt in this hellish heat. Arz can do no more, for Austria too needs every man; her food shortage, her political and military situation is far worse than that of Germany.

Strategy is a system of expedients, old Moltke once said. Was there still a military expedient for the Central Powers in the summer of 1918? Ludendorff's operation had failed. Most critics agree that the attack in the West should not

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have been made. Greater successes were to be had more cheaply elsewhere. A dozen German divisions could have struck Italy a destructive blow in April or May 1918. True, Italy would not even in that case have made a separate peace but the moral and material success would have been such that a peace of understanding would have drawn much nearer. England could have been struck harder, and made more inclined for peace, in the Balkans or in the Near East than on the Somme. General Max Hoffmann, the best head among the German strategists of the world war, pointed to the East: march on Moscow, he counselled, put a Tsar on the throne there, ally yourselves with Russia, and strike for India. An adventurous plan, but neither stupid nor crazy. If there was to be no peace of understanding with Russia, if the German finger was to be in every pie between the Caucasus and Finland and 800,000 German soldiers were to be kept there, then it would have been better to launch an Alexandrian venture than to lose oneself in half-measures.

In the Allied camp, too, in 1918, men were deliberating how best to bring about the decision. Churchill and Lloyd George had voted for operations in the East, the generals wished to attack in the West. In the end the German attack was awaited. That the decision was after all ripening in the East, that great successes were not to be had in the West but in what seemed to be minor theatres of war, were things that soon showed themselves, to the surprise of both parties.

The Austrians came again to German headquarters. They clamoured for peace and urged all sorts of concessions. Vienna had long since realized that peace was not to be had without sacrifices and that it would be better to make these

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sacrifices for peace than to await disaster. Austria was domestically and economically at the end of its strength; militarily it had been shaken by the Piave offensive of June, which had foundered in rain, floods and English counter-attacks. The Emperor Karl, General Arz, the Ministers Burin and Seidler, Prince Hohenlohe, all warned, as Czernin, Polzer and the whole circle about the young Emperor had been warning for long past. Ludendorff and Hindenburg held the appeals of the Austrians also to be a result of 'moral slackness'. They spoke of holding out and holding on. The Austrians wanted at the least a diplomatic action on a grand scale.

Nothing happened. The German western front was in continual movement. A hundred-mile-long wall of men, fire and steel swayed and wandered from the Aisne to the Maas. The Americans were there. Foch wallowed in reserves, he had tanks, aeroplanes and guns in plenty. He needed no especial strategy; all he had to do was to use his weapons and his superior strength. By this time it was probably too late even to consolidate the Maas positions, too late for a diversion in Italy or in the Balkans. Fatalistically, like a gambler, as he himself said later, Ludendorff waited what should come. On September 14th, Austria asked the Powers to open peace negotiations. On the same day, in the mountains of Macedonia, the fire of the Allies swelled to a fearful avalanche. On the next day the French and Serbs under General Franchet d'Esperey broke through the Bulgarian front.

The calamity was come.

CHAPTER IX

BULGARIA

IN six years Bulgaria has fought three wars. In 1912, when the harvest was in, the peasants and the peasants' sons from north and south of the Balkan mountains, from the lowlands of the Danube, from the rose-valleys of Eastern Rumelia, had hastened to the colours. The little country mustered a large and well-equipped army. Russia and France had not been sparing with money. They came in handsome uniforms, those men, some tall and swarthy, others short and stocky, the men of those Slav and Finnish-Mongolian stocks which fifteen hundred years of a common language and common suffering had moulded into Bulgars. Four-fifths of the soldiers were peasants; the reserve officers were peasants' sons, doctors, teachers, lawyers, officials. They went to war full of enthusiasm. Not only the liberation of their still oppressed Slav and Christian brothers from the Turkish yoke was their aim. Other visions led them. The Cross of Saint Andrew was again to be set in the place of the crescent on Saint Sophia in Constantinople. Ferdinand of Coburg-Kohary, the scion of the Saxon and Magyar nobility, wished to be crowned as Tsar Simeon there. A Great Bulgaria was to reach from the Bosphorus to Salonika, from the Danube to the Aegean. The new Balkan Power was to be first in the councils of its smaller brothers, the Serbs, the Montenegrins, the Greeks, and later perhaps the Bosnians and Croats.

The ragged Turkish armies were easily defeated at Kirk Kilisé and Lüle Burgas. But for weeks after the Bulgars

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vainly hammered at the walls of Adrianople, pressed against the Chatalja Line, prepared by German officers, which protected Stambul from the Slavs. Blood flowed in streams. There were few houses which did not mourn a dead man, see a cripple limp home, or care for wounded. But the Bulgars were swollen with pride in their victories. The tempestuously melancholy song 'Schumi Mariza' resounded as defiantly as of yore, with its heroic refrain: 'On Bulgars! Widows mourn your heroes.' The Turks were ready for peace. All the land up to the Midia line, even to Rodosto, to the Sea of Marmora, they were ready to give up — but not Constantinople. The Bulgars fought on. And then came the setback, that turning-point which, less through the heaviness of their losses than because of the disloyalty of their yesterday's friends, dismayed every Bulgar. In the struggle for booty they quarrelled with the Greeks. Salonika was the stake. But they fell out with the Serbs, too, on account of Macedonia. That the Serbs took sides with the Greeks especially pained them. And as they clung to their rocky walls and, after the first reverses, made ready to resist the Greeks and Serbs, as the Turks re-entered Adrianople, the Rumanians fell upon them from the rear! The Rumanians crossed the unprotected Danube frontier and, without meeting resistance, marched 'victoriously' to Sofia. Now Bulgaria made peace. With a petty share in the booty, without even a harbour, bled-white, exhausted, embittered, it broke off the struggle. Leaders and people brooded over revenge.

But in 1914, when Serbia had to fight Austria, Bulgaria was too weak to take part. She stayed neutral. Perhaps the day would come when Serbia would voluntarily surrender that which, in the Bulgarian view, she unjustly held. In

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September 1915 this day seemed to have come. On the Save and the Danube gathered the armies of Field-Marshal Mackensen. Belgrade had to make ready for the decisive battle. The Allied diplomacy worked feverishly in Nish and Sofia. Gold flowed and promises were made. The Serbs were coaxed and threatened. Bulgaria haggled. The Central Powers offered Macedonia and a piece of Old Serbia as well. But even then the Tsar would probably have remained neutral if the Allies had brought him the greater part of Macedonia and Adrianople. But the Serbs would have none of this. They preferred to go under, to yield to the Austrians in battle, or even to come to a direct understanding with them, rather than to buy Bulgarian neutrality. Not a foot of Macedonian soil would Pashitch, the old silver fox, give up; rather than that, he would make terms with Vienna. So Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the Central Powers! Her intervention did not have the desired effect. The Bulgars fought twice, and not well, against the Serbs, could not advance towards Pirot and Nish, made war in Albania on their own account, and thus opened the way to Albania for the Serbs. Soon there was friction between German and Bulgarian soldiers, officers, and staff-officers. The campaign was in the end only three-parts successful. Serbia's King, Crown Prince and staff, Serbia's Government and 60,000 unwounded Serb soldiers reached Corfu. The Allies landed their Orient Army at Salonika and established a new front, which from 1916 on did not change. The war went on, endlessly, as it seemed.

CHAPTER X

SALONIKA

FIELD-MARSHAL CONRAD, the man with the broad strategic vision, with the bold Napoleonic ideas and the unlucky hand in the execution of his far-reaching plans, was first to see the danger that threatened from Salonika. He proposed that the campaign should be carried through to the end. The Entente Army must be hurled into the sea and Salonika must be taken. Otherwise a malignant sore would arise there, a permanent threat to the flank of the Berlin-Belgrade-Baghdad Line and a nest of Serb regeneration. Falkenhayn refused. There were no railways and roads for troop movements and reinforcements. Groener, Chief of the German field railway system, was consulted. Groener had organized the great railway operation, the rapid movements of troops on the 'inner line', which had enabled the Central Powers to hold the game in their hands in 1914 and 1915 and to win important successes. Groener held the campaign against Salonika to be possible. But Falkenhayn did not like it. He was drawn toward Verdun. Collaboration with the Austrians had been repugnant to him for long enough. And dynastic considerations also played a part: the King of Greece, the unfortunate Constantine, was Wilhelm's brother-in-law. The Kaiser did not want to aggravate his troubles, and probably did not wish to arouse in the Bulgars an appetite for Salonika. Thus the front remained stable for two and three-quarter years. Sometimes the Allies attacked, first under Sarrail and then under Franchet d'Esperey; sometimes the Bulgars

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ventured a blow. But little had changed. When Rumania entered the war, in 1916, a Bulgarian army under Mackensen had occupied the Dobrudja. Sarraïl had tried to succour the Rumanians from Salonika. He made no progress.

Later, Conrad came forward again with his proposal to 'liquidate' Salonika. Ludendorff rejected it. Salonika, he said, saved the Germans a prisoner-of-war camp. The 300,000 Frenchmen, Britons, Greeks and Serbs sat there behind barbed wire and had to feed themselves. For guards, there were the Bulgars, who had nothing else to do. If Salonika were 'liquidated' the Bulgars would certainly go home and dismiss, whereas now they immobilized a large Entente army. Ludendorff preferred to conquer the Ukraine, Georgia and Finland. Ludendorff preferred to fight 'The great battle in France'. There 'the greatest task in its history' beckoned the German Army.

As late as the summer of 1918 there was perhaps something to be had fairly cheaply at Salonika. On the neighbouring front, in Albania, the Austrian General Pflanzer-Baltin, a vigorous and energetic officer who had gained much experience in the warfare in Bukowina, won substantial successes in the summer of 1918. Without disposing of 'shock divisions' he had used such troops and guns as he could find for a successful stroke which had won important positions from the Italians. For September he was planning an offensive against Valona, which was of greater value to the Central Powers than Venice or Helsingfors, just as Salonika would have been more valuable than Soissons or Minsk. Pflanzer-Baltin did not make his calculations with Ludendorffian measurements. He was only waiting for a cavalry division — a dismounted one, incidentally, for the horses had long since been eaten — of 3000 to 4000 men,

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with a few guns, and then he was going to spring at Valona.

In front of Salonika all was quiet until August. Then the rumours of an Allied offensive quickened. In Salonika harbour gigantic shipments of munitions were being unloaded. Guns arrived, troops, stores of the first quality, to fatten the Serbs and Greeks. The Bulgarian generals sent one telegram after another flying westward. They clamoured for reinforcements. Ludendorff answered that he had none. Apart from that, he did not take the Bulgars seriously nor think the matter important. The wandering battle in the West was eating up his reserves. With the troops that he lost on a single day in the West he could probably have made the Bulgarian front tenable.

The Bulgarian generals knew why they were worried. Since 1912 their little nation, counting something more than four million heads, had mobilized far more than a million men. The country was exhausted. The harvest had failed three times. There were no men on the farms, only women, ancients and children. The army had nothing substantial to eat. For months past only garlic and onion soup, maize bread, now and again a little cabbage. No rice, no corn, no sheep's meat. Their regimentals were hanging from them in rags and instead of boots they wore bursting sandals. Those who went on leave did not return to the front but wandered about in the mountains or at the base. None ventured to pursue them. Robbery was on the increase. At the front the men stayed in their trenches, but the officers would not have dared to order an attack. On top of this came the Allied propaganda. From Minister down to soldier, part of the Bulgarian people was not fond of the Germans, was tired not only of the war but of the alliance. The German officers in Sofia and at the headquarters were not

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popular. Now that they were there alone, lived better and had better uniforms, but had no troops of their own under them, only ordered the Bulgars about, they were tolerated most reluctantly. In Sofia there was still an American Minister, for the United States was not at war with Bulgaria. He sometimes travelled abroad and reported to General Franchet d'Esperey the mood in the country and at the front; he informed the politicians in Sofia of the strength of the Entente and of the plans for a just peace which Wilson advocated. Bulgaria was ripe for a breakaway.

On the morning of September 15th the artillery fire, which on the preceding day had battered the entire front from Vardar to Lake Ochrida, began to concentrate upon two Bulgarian divisions with a forty-kilometre front (a Bulgarian division was at that time as strong as a German Corps, about 16,000 to 20,000 men). North of Lake Ostrovo French infantry attacked. The Bulgars were smashed, dispersed, taken prisoner. The troops hardly offered any further resistance. The men stayed in the dug-outs when the enemy attacked, laid down their weapons, fled. The reserve artillery had no opportunity to open fire, so quickly did the French advance. Only the pathless mountains still delayed the French. In five days they pushed forward only twenty-five miles. But only because there were no roads. The Bulgars had no front left on this twenty-five-mile sector. True, the flanks held, here and there a division stood fast. The break-through had not yet widened out. It was still no Caporetto, the thrust might still have been warded off, the French attacked in flank. But the reserves mutinied. Ministers dashed to the front, the Crown Prince was there, everything was done to cheer the men. Some of them allowed themselves to be talked over and advanced, but then they

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halted again and broke. The stream of fugitives from the front poured, an army of marauders, over the base, into the interior, burned down the arsenals, plundered the villages, ravaged its own country like the very Huns themselves. This was the end, this was the dreaded inner enemy, this was Bolshevism.

Ludendorff now suddenly sent reserves. The Austrians scraped together a few brigades. In Belgrade a new army command was established under Marshal Kövesz, who three years earlier had taken Belgrade. There was still hope of closing the Vardar valley. The First Bulgarian Army was still retreating in order to its frontiers; two Bulgarian divisions, accompanied by German and Austrian detachments, were marching in good discipline up the Vardar valley. But in Bulgaria everything was in confusion. The peasant leader, Stamboliski, who like all peasant leaders of 1918 was a three-quarter Bolshevik, recently released from prison, had declared himself ready for a compromise and had gone to the army. But among the mutineers he too became an extremist. He telegraphed the proclamation of the Republic to the capital and sanctioned the desertion of the soldiers.

In Sofia trustworthy troops had been concentrated. But they could not be used against the Serbs and the French. For three days the battle with the marauders raged before the doors of the capital. When they were beaten, the French had to be appealed to for an armistice. It meant disarmament, capitulation, defeat. The Balkans were lost to the Central Powers.

CHAPTER XI

A GAMBLER LOSES HIS NERVE

ONLY about September 20th did General Ludendorff realize the gravity and dimension of the catastrophe at Salonika. Now that he saw the enemy marching on Sofia, on Nish, on the Berlin-Baghdad Line, he became aware that the war could be lost, even if one still had Russia in one's pocket. While the west front crumbled away and the imagination of the generals still clung desperately to the non-existent Antwerp-Maas line, he sent reserves rushing to the south-east and assembled on the Danube detachments withdrawn from the Ukraine and Rumania. General Kövesz in Belgrade saw ever more plainly that Serbia could not be held, that the Danube was the first possible line of defence. In Albania Pflanze-Baltin received the order to retreat. Along miserable paths, without railways, through malarial regions and over mountains, he brought 160,000 men, front-line troops and staffs with all equipment, back to the homeland in four weeks. To the homeland? As Pflanze, who for days had been without all news from headquarters, reached Cattaro on November 4th he learned to his astonishment that nothing remained which an old k.u.k. soldier could call homeland. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had disappeared. Its still unconquered Balkan Army dissolved itself.

When Ludendorff learned of the Bulgarian armistice he lost his nerve. All was lost. The strategist saw no way out. Now the diplomats would have to help. The Quarter-

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master-General telegraphed to Berlin. He demanded an armistice 'within forty-eight hours'; he demanded a Cabinet that would be able to obtain an armistice. Once more he overthrew a Chancellor, this time not because he was too far to the left and too pacifist, but because he was too far to the right and too slow in capitulating. The Kaiser summoned Prince Max of Baden. Scheidemann, David, Erzberger and Hausmann joined the Cabinet. Prussia tottered. Soon more than that was to collapse. On October 3rd Tsar Ferdinand, ex-King, left his adopted Fatherland. The quotations for crowns and thrones declined steeply.

As late as the middle of August German headquarters had still had much to say about annexations. A month later allies were breaking away and the collapse of the German front was near at hand, but headquarters still thought it had time. On September 29th, Ludendorff demanded an armistice within a few hours. On October 4th the new, hastily formed government, with its princely chief, decided on a peace offer to Wilson.

On October 5th begins the painful dispute about commas and formulas, the long haggle between Wilson and Lansing, on the one hand, and the Cabinet of Prince Max on the other. This diplomatic manœuvring has one single aim, to accelerate the inner disintegrating military defeat of the Central Powers, to postpone the armistice in order that it may develop into certain capitulation; and each day of this manœuvring costs thousands of human beings their lives. And in these weeks, while crowns are rolling, empires cracking, thrones falling, states collapsing and fronts crumbling, something else begins: the fading of Wilson's halo, the pitiful self-disintegration of a legend. The great peacemaker, the world umpire, shrinks to the little professor,

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who prolongs the war for the sake of his sophistries, and thus becomes himself the prisoner of calculating politicians and generals. Everything that later happens in Germany and among the Germans, the whole monstrous wave of hatred and contempt which rose and rose for fifteen years until it swallowed Germany, the frivolity, even the lasciviousness, with which the youth of Germany treated the conceptions of justice and civilization, have their beginnings in the mighty disillusionment which seized the German people in those last weeks of war. Disillusionment about the old Conservative forces which had lost the war, and disillusionment about the new forces of the West which had promised a peace of understanding, justice and fraternal democracy and now meanly sneaked away from the fulfilment of their promise. The fact that through Wilson's evasions and tricks the war is prolonged by four weeks, that the mountain of dead goes on growing — this is the thing that in the eyes of the German people, in the very moment of its awakening, gave the democratic ideal a deadly blow. From now on the Germans suffer from this spiritual phantom. For it cannot be denied that Wilson in these October weeks of 1918 took upon himself blood guilt and a debt towards suffering Europe that can never be redeemed.

CHAPTER XII

FALLING WALLS

For four years the Central Powers were a gigantic beleaguered stronghold. Food had become ever scarcer, the ring of enemies ever tighter. White bread gave way to black bread, black bread to maize bread, and maize bread to a hardly edible product of potatoes, poor-quality flour of all kinds and some indefinable substitute ingredients. Even this bread was scarce. There were weeks in which the bread ration was reduced, others in which it was absent. Meat could be had at fantastic prices once a week, for four-fifths of the peoples it was beyond purchase. Fats disappeared. Old wax candles, stored in cupboards for decades for ritual purposes, were fetched out to supply fat for meagre meals. Dried vegetables ('Barbed wire', the people call this) form the basis of nourishment. It is not much more than dried vegetable waste. It is boiled in water without fat, sometimes without even salt, and eaten without anything else.

A State machine that still functions effects at least a fairly equal distribution of the scanty foodstuffs. Bread and jam are poor, there are few potatoes, few roots, but what there is is distributed in an orderly manner and is punctually delivered. In Austria a more human, more easy-going, more good-natured State machine, vastly to be preferred in normal times to the Prussian, breaks down under this unaccustomed task. It is neither able to put its hands on stocks in the well-to-do rural districts, nor is it capable of distributing such foodstuffs as it requisitions justly and smoothly in

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the districts most hardly hit. The apparatus of officialdom is gigantically inflated, the workshies and stop-at-homes and cushy-job-holders in their tens of thousands throng the Government offices great and small. Not only do these parasites evade front-line service and let others die for them who are mostly poorer, more honourable, weaker and unhealthier, but they plunder the State and the community. They get the most and the best of the available stocks of food. The young Kaiser wanted to change that. His youthful ardour and his touching diligence are not equal to mastering the monster of corruption. He may appear all unannounced in the bureaux—they call him 'Karl the Sudden' for that reason—the dreaded Surgeon-General may pitilessly comb out these 'reserved' and 'C.3' throngs in the Government offices and send thousands to the front—in a few weeks they are back again, or others in their place. The Kaiser has proceedings started against the hated war profiteer Krantz; he wishes to make an example. The formal justice of lawbooks breaks down before the phenomenon of profiteering, of usury and of corruption. The Krantz trial ends in a rebuff for the State; the swindler triumphs, although the whole world knows that he is guilty.

Want and hunger sharpen the friction within the multi-national State. Hungary wallows in plenty but will give nothing of her abundance away, will hardly supply the army. Only an hour by rail from Vienna crisp white rolls, cream, pastry, meat are to be had in quantities. In Vienna the people drink a brew of fig-roots for coffee, the children have no milk, horseflesh is a luxury. In the interior of Bohemia the Czech peasants have more than they can eat or use, but they hold it for their patriotic duty to give up as little as they can, for they do not want to help the Germans. In the

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Bohemian frontier districts, in the Erzgebirge, in the coal-fields, typhoid born of hunger is raging, rickety abortions in the shape of children are growing up, starvation is spreading. Hatred between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechs is growing and such of it as survives today had its roots in the war years.

More than two million Jews lived in old Austria-Hungary. But now the doorway to the East has been opened wide, for Poland, the Ukraine, Rumania and Serbia have been conquered. From the East stream thousands of Jews into the land. In compact communities they sit in Vienna, in thinner ones they spread over the country, penetrate to districts where the Jew was formerly only known from hearsay. Everywhere they are dealers, middlemen, profiteers. Often they only earn enough by these means to keep body and soul together, sometimes they grow rich. Among the people, at all events, spreads the conviction of their cunning, their tricks and their frauds. A wave of anti-Semitism rises high and the ruling classes, Kaiser, Church, Army, are accused of being in the service of the Jews.

Roundabout the beleaguered stronghold, the walls of the fronts now collapse. Bulgaria has fallen. In October follows, just as rapidly, the collapse of Turkey. Cut off from the Central Powers, she cannot fight on. In Syria the British are advancing, from Armenia to the Mediterranean rage the risings of Christians, Kurds and Arabs. In Constantinople the dictatorship of the fantastic Enver Pasha disintegrates.

The western front is still a wall that wanders backward. On October 2nd the British occupy Armentières, on the 9th Cambrai, on the 13th the French take Laon, on the 17th the Germans evacuate Ostend, on November 3rd the British and Belgians enter Ghent. The Antwerp-Maas Line is

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reached, not in a strategic retreat, but in a half-rout, in an exhausting struggle carried on by German divisions without reliefs or reinforcements against an enemy daily increasing in numbers, splendidly equipped and well fed. It is all one where Foch attacks. This is no longer strategy, but the organized application of a twofold and threefold superior strength against a weaker enemy, of full bellies against empty ones, of tanks, aeroplanes, new guns and new machine guns against the old iron of an army which in every point is at its last gasp.

In the East, too, the wall is tottering. While the Germans permit themselves the grotesque jest of proclaiming the Landgrave of Hessen King of Finland as late as October 10th, Bolshevist or nationalist risings are flaming up from north to south, the Austrian troops in the Ukraine are mutinying, the Rumanians are bestirring themselves again. The German troops of occupation are like to sink in the waters of a hostile world around them because, week by week, their best men are taken from them to supply reinforcements for the West and for the Balkans.

The outer walls of the stronghold have in reality already fallen, in these days. Will the inner walls and the intermediate positions still hold? That will depend whether mutineers and marauders raise their head within the citadel itself, whether the High Command can keep the reins in its hand.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CURSE OF AUSTRIA: 'TOO LATE!'

'AUSTRIA: always one year, one army, one idea too late,' said an intelligent Frenchman once. The 'too late' was Austria's curse, perhaps Austria's essential destiny. For this State between East and West, between Europe and the Orient, between Capitalism and Feudalism, between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, this vessel containing so many peoples and civilizations, contained two forms of life, and could not keep pace with the West because it reached so far into the East. It stretched into the zone where work and speed are everything, but it was rooted also in that other the motto of which is the Russian *Sejtschas*, that 'soon' which may mean today, tomorrow, sometime, never.

The World War gave Austria a last chance. The Slav nations all have two irons in the fire. They count on the victory of the Entente, but they reckon also with a German victory. Should the Central Powers win, that is, if they maintain their position and the Entente is too weak or unwilling to destroy Austria, the Slav nations are also prepared to come to an understanding with her. Intolerable, they hold, would be a German overlordship over the small nations of Central Europe. The Czech parties follow but slowly the stormy progress of the revolution abroad. Among the Czechs in the homeland are many convinced royalists, like Kramar, who was condemned to death and reprieved by Kaiser Karl. Among the Croats are violent enemies of

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Serbia. Among the Poles are many supporters of the Austro-Polish solution, of the coronation of Kaiser Karl as King of Poland. As late as the beginning of October individual Slav leaders are still undecided whether they should make their peace with Habsburg and get the harvests in or plunge themselves into the whirlpool of revolution. Mighty and daunting stands on the horizon the spectre of Bolshevism. The Russophile Slavs of Austria lost not only their taste for Pan-Slavism but also for revolution through the Bolshevik revolution. That gave Austria a last chance.

The young Kaiser had visions of the reconciliation of his peoples, of a federalization of Austria. But he allowed himself to be caught in the Magyar trap. He took the oath to the holy Hungarian Crown, which bound him to defend the integrity of Hungary's frontiers. But no solution of the South Slav question is thinkable without infringing those frontiers. If the South Slav problem remain unsolved, the Czech problem is insoluble. And the longer one waited, the more that problem developed into a Czecho-Slovak problem. It, too, reached across the Hungarian frontiers. Hungary's veto prevented the solution of the Austrian question. The Kaiser-King does not wish to use his most effective weapon — the introduction of the universal right to vote in Hungary — while the war is on. The men are at the front, they could not vote. And if a Magyar revolution were brought about, would the Slavs then stand by the House of Habsburg or would that House find everyone against it? Was not Hungary always the solid core of the Empire?

The Crown allows valuable time to lapse. After Caporetto and before Brest-Litovsk, in the glory of renewed martial success and under the spell of the universal fear of Bolshevism, before Germany had played her last card in the West —

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that would have been the right moment. When nothing happened at the beginning of 1918 the opposition of the Czechs hardened. In the summer, and up to September 1918, the Emperor's hands were still free. Now, after the offer of peace and Wilson's dictation of his conditions, they are no longer free. What was now given, was given under Wilson's pressure. What was now offered, was regarded by the Slavs not as a Habsburg offer, but as a present from the Entente.

On October 15th the Kaiser called a Crown Council in the palace in Vienna. On the preceding day the Czech workmen had demonstrated. A revolution had been announced. It did not break out because the Socialist leaders surrendered to the bourgeois-national revolution. Vienna did not know that. The very harmless workers' demonstrations could be interpreted as a sign of a relatively calm mood among the Czech masses. The Kaiser now conceived a plan. But this time, as always, he knew not how and with whom to realize his plan. He wished to proclaim the federalization of Austria by manifesto. But how could this manifesto be countersigned by the Hussarek Cabinet, which had shown marked sympathy for the Germans and antipathy against the Slavs? The Kaiser could not make up his mind whether or not he should first of all appoint a new Cabinet. His particular confidant, the Finance Minister, Spitzmüller, a characteristic type of the astute, educated German-Jewish statesman of the liberal Austrian camp, sounded the parties and individual politicians. The coming man is seen in Lammasch, professor of international law, an enemy of the pan-Germans, a man of Christian ideas and an advocate of understanding who enjoys great prestige in the West. But the nationalities and parties are unwilling to risk

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anything further for the sake of the Crown, the Czechs are opposed to any Austrian Cabinet. They might have agreed to a Bohemian Cabinet and acknowledged the Emperor as King of Bohemia. But one could not sacrifice the Bohemian Germans and the Moravians to the Czechs, those very peoples whose regiments had fought most bravely and had paid the heaviest tribute in blood! Difficulty adds itself to difficulty in the Crown Council. There is agreement that unless clarity is reached in the South Slav question all this labour is wasted. But for that the assent of the Hungarians is needed. The Prime Minister, Wekerle, is called to Vienna. He imposes his veto on any diminution of Hungarian rights. Nevertheless, the manifesto is agreed. On October 16th it appears. Never was an attempted rescue more catastrophic in its effects for the rescuers, never was so much goodwill so lamentably squandered. The manifesto is a misfire. Any good it might have done is invalidated through a single sub-sentence: 'This reformation, which in no wise affects the integrity of the provinces of the Holy Hungarian Crown. . . . For the Czechoslovaks and Southern Slavs that is unacceptable.

But the boulder is moving, it carries countries and the ruins of States with it, an avalanche goes crashing down into the valley. The Provincial Councils which the manifesto has conceded are forthwith formed and begin to govern. They do not bother about the Central Government, they turn to foreign politics, and address themselves to the troops of their several nationalities. The Lammasch Cabinet, which in spite of everything comes into existence, and in which such excellent men as Josef Redlich and Ignaz Seipel sit, lacks power or a field of action. There is a Railway Minister without a yard of trucks, a Minister of War without

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uniforms or rifles, a Home Minister without local authorities. There are still Cabinet meetings, but the Ministers only refrain from resigning in order that the Kaiser may not be entirely without representatives through whom he can negotiate with the Entente and with the National Councils.

Hungary has slain Austria, and on top of that Hungary now announces the complete separation of the two States. Only the person of the Monarch shall be still common to both. The Kaiser goes to Budapest, and he returns to Vienna in the company of Count Karolyi, the Opposition leader, who has suddenly become the hero of the masses. He first tries out a Cabinet under Count Hadik and then summons Karolyi, while he makes Andrassy, son of a more celebrated father, Foreign Minister. On October 27th Andrassy annuls the alliance with Germany and accepts all Wilson's conditions. At the same time the Hungarian War Minister, Béla Linder, sets fire to the last arsenal of the old Empire, the Imperial and Royal Army. He calls on the Hungarian troops to leave the front and to hasten home for 'the defence of the Hungarian frontiers'.

On October 28th the masses in Prague learn of Andrassy's Note to Wilson. All conditions accepted? The independence of the Czechoslovaks and South Slavs as well? In a trice hundreds of thousands are in the streets, singing, embracing each other; the eagles and the black-yellow emblems are hauled down, the officers have the rosettes torn from their collars and the cockades from their caps, unless they do this themselves. The independent Czechoslovak State is proclaimed. The National Council of the Czechs takes over control. As the Governor returns from Vienna next morning he is arrested. The military function is transferred to the Sokols. There is no bloodshed anywhere.

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in Bohemia on this day. In the evening railwaymen in the German frontier districts report what has happened in Prague. The starving and desperate German people silently takes note of it.

Early that same day Field-Marshal Boroevitch, the victor in eleven Isonzo battles, planned to counter-attack the English and Italians, who had crossed the Piave. Everything was ready. Boroevitch was sure of himself. But the attack did not take place. The Hungarian regiments obeyed their War Minister Linder and mutinied. As the Czechs saw this they also refused to attack. The last bulwark began to crumble. The Kaiser's army had ceased to exist, it was now but a conglomeration of rebellious national groups, which in the following hours began to fight each other.

It is a remarkable revolution that in October and November 1918 puts an end to the two Central European Empires. Neither in Vienna nor in Berlin nor in Prague nor in Budapest is it a spontaneous eruption of the masses against a detested old regime. This revolution is everywhere made from above, 'ordered' as the last way out of an almost inextricable situation, and only when the rulers, who still rule, set the stone in motion, does it begin to roll and becomes an avalanche. Even the Czechs, the most logical and the clearest of the antagonists of Austria and the Habsburgs, waited with their revolution until Vienna itself, through the acceptance of Wilson's conditions and the declaration of Andrassy, in a sense gave permission for the formation of the independent state. This, it is true, had already been constituted in France as the Czechoslovak National Council, and through that organ was sovereign commander of Legions fighting in two continents, and was recognized as a belligerent power by France, England, Italy and the United States.

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But at home the Czech leaders waited long. On October 7th these leaders, foremost among them the wily Svehla, later for many years Prime Minister of the Republic, finally decided against Austria. But then, equipped with Austrian passports and with the knowledge of the Vienna Government, they open relations with their friends in the most correct form and travel to Switzerland, half revolutionaries and half emissaries of the Vienna Government, which now wants but one thing at any price — peace. And even on the sunny October 28th, a day electric with mass passions, when the eagles, the cockades and the officers' stars fall in Prague, the National Council does not utter the last word. Already caricatures of the Kaiser, who is unjustly portrayed as a drunkard, are being posted, and derisive songs about Karl the Last are being sung, but the manifesto of the men of October speaks only of an independent Czechoslovak State, not of a republic. Only fourteen days later, after Budapest and Munich and Kiel have revolted and the Kaiser has in fact ceased to rule anywhere, does the National Assembly in Prague pronounce the dethronement of the dynasty. Grotesquely, the Bill is tabled by the monarchist Kramarsch.

CHAPTER XIV

LUDENDORFF ORDERS DEMOCRACY

IN Germany, too, it is no mass movement that lifts the old regime off its hinges. The regime itself enforces, as its last actions, the alteration of the Constitution. The German people itself was scarcely capable of major decisions. Disillusioned, shamelessly lied to, and now come down to earth with a crash, embittered, hungry and defeated, this people would have been capable of jumping out of the State of order into the frying pan of anarchy. But it was not equal to taking its own destiny in hand, of continuing to defend itself against foreign foes, of reorganizing its life at home.

'The Parliamentarization of Germany', says the Marxist Rosenberg 'was not achieved by the Reichstag but decreed by Ludendorff.' It is still the Supreme Command which pushes the Reich Cabinet and Reichstag forward and urges it, step by step, away from the soil of the old Prussian, Junker and militarist State and towards the new world of a parliamentary democracy. On October 25th this process is completed. The Reichstag votes a reform of the Constitution which leaves the Kaiser only as a decorative head of State, as a hereditary president, which deprives the army of its especial status, and which transfers the government of the Reich from the Federal Council to the parliamentary Reich Government and Reichstag. Ludendorff's last act was the democratization of Germany. The next day brings the resignation of the general who for two years has been

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dictator of Germany. As was his custom from the time of his dictatorship, he threatened Wilhelm with his resignation while making a report, because the Kaiser seemed not to be in accord with the views of his Quartermaster-General in everything. But in the meantime something had changed through General Ludendorff's orders and demands which General Ludendorff himself seemingly had not realized: Germany had received a responsible government. The Kaiser no longer needed, with an anxious and helpless Chancellor at his side, to conduct policy himself and for that reason to cower before the Supreme Command. In Berlin there was a Cabinet backed by the great parties. In his Majesty's Government sat Philipp Scheidemann, the rebel who bears about the same resemblance to Mirabeau as the whole German Revolution to the French, but who in Wilhelm's eyes at this moment stood for the people. To what end did he still need the general with the sergeant-major's manner? For the conduct of the war? The war was lost; even the all-knowing Ludendorff himself admitted that now. To bring back the soldiers? Another could perhaps do that better. Wilhelm irritably answers the threatening commander: 'All right then, go!' The tragi-comic circle is complete. Ludendorff had deprived the Kaiser of power; then, from purely military considerations, he had made the Reichstag ruler; and now the Emperor derived from the power of the Reichstag a last shimmer of power for himself. *It sufficed for the dismissal of Ludendorff, the man hated by all alike, by the Kaiser, the people, the parliamentarians, the Entente.*

From Kieff Groener, the 'railwayman', was fetched, one of the most talented pupils of the Schlieffen school. They had smiled over him all too long. Now they turned to him,

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perhaps because he seemed the best man to bring the army home. It was too late for more than that.

For the curse of procrastination, of the eternal 'too late', hangs not only over the end of the Habsburgs but also over that of the Hohenzollerns. A peace of understanding should have been offered in the spring. That was when London and Paris still trembled about Ludendorff's secret, when the sword of the last battle had not yet been blunted in the mire of Flanders and the chalk of Champagne. In the midsummer at the latest time would still have remained for the change over to parliamentarism; in August Ludendorff should have gone and the people should have been allowed to see that the situation of Germany was desperate, that victory was lost, and that their rulers at least had goodwill enough to appoint new men and seek a way out. Now there were two and a half million Germans in the West and the Yankees alone numbered two million. Too late, now, the complicated plans for saving the situation which were advanced by the political confidants and advisers of the Supreme Command, such as Niemann, Haeften and Bauer — for instance, the surrender of the fleet to England in order to win British favour, and the like.

Ludendorff's resignation now no longer made any particular impression. If the Kaiser had overthrown him eight or even five weeks earlier, if the monarch had dethroned the dictator and himself taken the initiative in the democratization of Germany, the Kaiser might have saved himself. But now the people clamoured from day to day more loudly for the abdication of the Emperor. Not even this is a sign of revolutionary mass passions. For the office of Kaiser, as it existed after October 26th, was no longer a position of such strength as to be worth attacking. The people simply sought

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a symbol of the strange events that had happened. The people believed that Wilhelm was an obstacle to peace. Wilson's involved and parson-like phrases allowed the interpretation that he would conclude no peace with Kaiser Wilhelm II. For that very reason had Ludendorff demanded the reform of the constitution.

Prince Max's Cabinet realized that the Kaiser would have to go. Still nobody wanted the Republic, not even the Social Democrats. Perhaps they dimly felt that a responsibility impended which would exceed their strength. They were a revolutionary party. Within a few weeks they had achieved more, without doing anything much to that end, than they had ever hoped. The wishes of Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg would have been completely satisfied by a continuance of the struggle for socialist aims within a parliamentary monarchy, when they would have been able further to 'keep the flag flying' and to save up Marxist clichés about the 'future State' for highdays and holidays. But the person of the Kaiser was in their way. As long as Wilhelm sat up there the people would not believe in the new era and the Independents and Spartacists would continue to increase and multiply. So the Social Democrat Secretaries of State, under their pressure of their parliamentary comrades, began about the end of October ever more urgently and more stubbornly to demand the abdication of the Kaiser.

CHAPTER XV

THE KAISER WON'T HEAR

THE Prince of Baden does not know how to set about the task of making the Kaiser understand the necessity of his abdication. Wilhelm feels distinctly that there is something afoot and withdraws from the circle of the politicians. On October 29th he leaves for the West, 'for the front' — in reality for Spa, which still lies far behind the front. The generals have strengthened the Kaiser in this idea of 'going to the front'. He must show himself to the troops. The generals, too, feel that the decision is at hand. They have carefully side-stepped all demands of the Ministers that they should prompt the Kaiser to abdicate. Let the civilians do their own dirty work.

Among the generals is one who has a very clear conception of what should happen now. Strangely, he is no Diehard Prussian, no Junker, no Herr von Itzenplitz und von Zitzewitz, not one of those gentlemen who for three hundred years have supported the soldier kingdom of the Hohenzollerns. The Junkers, in 1918 as in 1806, have become very modest. They were never in the front line when things went wrong. Groener is a South German and a half-outsider, who advocates a strange and romantic but really kingly idea. The Kaiser, argues Groener, should not flee, he ought to be in the trenches. And he does not mean this in a manner of speaking, does not mean that the Kaiser should go to the Villa Fraineuse, or to some headquarters with a bombproof dug-out far behind the front. Groener means

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literally, in the trenches. During an attack, somewhere, somewhen, the Kaiser should place himself at the head of his troops.¹ Should he be wounded, the nation would be reconciled with him; everything would be forgotten and a new start could be made. Should he fall, that would be the only worthy end for the successor of Frederick the Great. The blood of the dead Kaiser would then form the cement which would bind dynasty and people together for centuries.

Groener says nothing about his idea to the Kaiser personally. The men of the court to whom he mentions it indignantly reject it. To them it is quite incomprehensible that a man should expect of the Kaiser what the Kaiser for four and a half years has expected from millions of Germans.

The days pass, the Social Democrats clamour, the masses become impatient, the armistice still does not come, the Kaiser sojourns in Belgium, far behind the front, which is still crumbling and slowly caving in, Prince Max of Baden is in bed with influenza, the Ministers are helpless. Once they sent Herr von Delbrück, an old Prussian official, to the Kaiser to prompt him to abdicate. The Kaiser indignantly refuses. Now the Social Democrats begin to use the word Republic. For, after all, Wilhelm's abdication will not of itself solve the problem. The Crown Prince is impossible as a successor. True, during the war he has often shown sure judgment in things political, often assessed the situation better than Ludendorff, but he counts on both sides of the frontier as 'the butcher of Verdun', as frivolous, loose-living, reactionary. That he spent his days playing tennis and flirting while his soldiers died has not been forgiven him. The Crown Prince, too, must therefore renounce his claim. A trustee-

¹ The Kaiser himself, in a letter written at the time of the Russian humiliation by the Japanese, gave precisely this advice to the Tsar of Russia.

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government for Prince Wilhelm must be formed and now arises the question whether fat Eitel Friedrich is sufferable as Prince Regent. While Ministers and generals think over these things, while the ally in the south-east collapses, the people itself intervenes, or rather, in the first place, a small section of the people.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GENERALS' BREACH OF FAITH

BUT first comes a scene which the most ingenious writer could not better have devised to show that destiny has finally given its verdict — through the lips, or rather, through the silence of the most loyal.

In the night of November 8th-9th, 1918, many senior officers of all ranks and services received an urgent order to go as quickly as possible to General Headquarters at Spa. No reason was given.

From each division of the Armies of the Crown Prince Rupprecht, the German Crown Prince, and General Gallwitz selected divisional, brigade and regimental commanders — without reference to their superiors — raced through the cold, wet November night from Flanders, Artois and Champagne to headquarters, where they arrived in the early hours of November 9th. Frozen, drenched, sleepy, unwashed and breakfastless, these officers gathered in the Mirror Room of the Hotel Britannique at Spa and asked each other wonderingly what the Supreme Command could want with them.

A staff captain entered with a list in his hand, counted those present, and ascertained that eleven were missing. The thirty-nine others were present and waited, tired, puzzled and depressed by the general disorder which they saw about them.

About nine o'clock Field-Marshal von Hindenburg (later President of the Republic), with Colonel Heye (later a

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Reichswehr General under the Republic) and some others entered the room. The Field-Marshal saluted those present and then explained the motive of the meeting. The abdication of the Kaiser was being demanded. The Supreme Command hoped to be able to oppose this demand, if the necessary assurances could be given by the army in the field. The officers present, he added, were to express their opinion about these matters, which Colonel Heye would later elucidate in detail. The Field-Marshal then added that the question was whether the Kaiser could put himself at the head of his entire army and march on Berlin in order there to claim his Imperial and Royal crown. Such an undertaking would demand that the entire army should turn about in face of the enemy — with whom an armistice had still not been concluded and who would of course rapidly pursue — and try to fight its way to Berlin in foot-marches which would take from two or three weeks, for the railways could not be counted on. The difficulties of provisioning, the exhausting ordeals and deprivations to which the troops would again be exposed, without a breathing space, were particularly stressed by the Field-Marshal.

But did he so? Strange, that all later accounts unanimously reported that Hindenburg did *not* personally appear at all in the front place, but only later, when all was 'over'. Brehm, in his book, *That Was the End*, specifically states that Heye greeted the assembled officers with the words:

I welcome you here on behalf of the Field-Marshal.
The Field-Marshal wished to greet you in person, but
he is unable to get away.

And all other versions agree on this point. Are they ashamed of the part which Hindenburg and the generals of

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the Supreme Command played in this hour? Do they rely on the solemn word of honour which every one of the assembled officers had to give, that he would 'for ever' maintain silence about this fateful scene?

But the secret leaked out, nevertheless. A young captain of the German Crown Prince's staff was not sworn, probably through an oversight! And he reported in writing to his superior, the German Crown Prince. The Crown Prince, filled with hatred of Hindenburg and Groener, then published this report in his *Memoirs*. This report states, textually: 'After this description of the situation, which was in all points expounded by the Field-Marshal, and not by Colonel Heye, the former left the room.'

Hindenburg fled. He fled before the horrified eyes of the front-line officers to whom three days before, in an army order, he had declared: 'For the army, every member of which has taken the military oath to the Emperor, there is no Kaiser question. Come what may the army will be true to its oath.'

That was on November 5th, 1918, three short days earlier. And now, today, there *is* a Kaiser question? 'The army will be true to its oath'. And the generals?

Now, in the presence of the silent General Groener and the Kaiser's aide-de-camp, General von Plessen, Colonel Heye made known to the assembled officers the questions which they were desired individually to answer:

1. What is the attitude of the troops towards the Kaiser? Will it be possible for the Kaiser at the head of his troops if need be to reconquer the country by arms?

2. What is the attitude of the troops towards Bolshevism? Will they if necessary take up the struggle against Bolshevism at home with arms?

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The officers look at each other, they cannot trust their ears. What is the meaning of this? Since when has the army been asked its opinion? Since when have Prussian officers asked if they shall obey their generals, generals if they shall follow their Emperor, since when have generals asked their officers if they, the generals, shall still obey the Kaiser? How comes the Field-Marshal suddenly to demand 'the necessary assurances' from the army, instead of commanding it, as his office and his conscience dictate? Do none of these smart, red-tabbed general staff officers, none of these bemedalled generals, the 'Kaiser's Paladins', notice that they, and they alone, are importing 'Bolshevism' into the army?

A young major suddenly jumps up. 'This is crazy! Are we to kow-tow to these swines at the base, this pack of trench-dodgers and lead-swingers? Isn't this just lunacy?'

Where is the Field-Marshal? Where is the Emperor himself, in whose name two million German heroes died, for whom six million Germans were wounded? Where is the Kaiser and his generals?

A staff officer shrugs his shoulders: 'We must begin. You will please go in pairs into the next room, where Colonel Heye will take your statements in writing. The questions are questions of conscience, which each officer must decide for himself. We will begin with the right wing of the army.'

Questions of conscience? Not questions of honour and of history? 'Each officer must decide for himself?' Not in a community of pledged men, surrounded by the heroes of the Somme, of Verdun, of Ypres, of Sedan and Spichern, of Waterloo and Leipzig, of Leuthen and Fehrbellin?

'Next, please. Quicker, please!'

Hindenburg sends urgent messages to Heye; he wants to

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know the result. An Imperial equerry comes to Heye: 'His Majesty requires the result.'

Heye himself brings it to the Kaiser, who is standing in the garden, surrounded by his generals:

'One officer answered the first question with "Yes", fifteen could not bring themselves to make a clear decision, twenty-three answered "No".'

'Eight officers answered "No" to the second question, twelve demanded time for rest and preparation, nineteen saw a possibility.'

One officer, one single Prussian officer, remained unreservedly and unconditionally true to his oath to the Kaiser.

Count von der Schulenburg (later a deputy of the German People's Party) broke the icy silence which followed Heye's words by the impassioned question: 'And what of the military oath which we and all German soldiers have sworn to their Supreme Warlord?'

Field-Marshal von Hindenburg and all the Kaiser's generals stand silently there and listen to this verdict upon themselves, the army and the Empire.

Forty-eight hours later Wilhelm II crosses the Dutch frontier.

It is very timely — especially in view of the events of February 4th, 1938 — to recall what the Quartermaster-General, with the silent assent of the Field-Marshal, said at the end: 'Military oath? Warlord? After all, these are but words!'

CHAPTER XVII

RED SAILORS

THE submarine campaign has been stopped, because Wilson has made this a condition of further negotiations. For the western front, the cessation of submarine warfare means the aggravation of a situation already precarious, for from now on the Entente reinforcements can cross the Channel rapidly, unhindered and in unlimited numbers. The admirals in Kiel discuss whether something cannot be done. The German fleet, during the war, has for the most part lain inactively in harbour. During the peace negotiations it will be little more than an encumbrance. The generals decide to use the fleet for a blow against the Channel. The undertaking was from the military point of view not senseless, though risky. The German ships would perhaps be able to regain their harbours before the Grand Fleet could reach the spot. Perhaps it would be able to engage and beat parts of the British Armada. True, it is nonsense to assert, as some now assert, that it would have been possible to destroy the British fleet and thus transform the war.

The sailors think the venture mad. They are estranged from their leaders and officers. They distrust these gentlemen, who for years have been living well and drinking champagne in the wardrooms and do nothing but worry and harass their men. The sailors believe that the admirals are planning a stroke against the Government, that they wish to upset the peace negotiations through this naval venture. As the sailors on October 29th and 30th receive

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orders to get up steam, the crews of two battleships mutiny. The project is given up. The crews of the two ships *Thüringen* and *Helgoland* are put under arrest. In the year 1917 two sailors were shot and many others imprisoned for trivial rebellion. The sailors fear that this sanguinary retribution may repeat itself. They decide to help themselves. They occupy Kiel and take over the ships. On November 7th, the great German fleet is in the hands of mutinous sailors. The officers are under arrest and powerless. The news flies to Berlin that Kiel and the fleet are in the hand of the Reds. Berlin sends Gustav Noske to Kiel. Here begins the career of a much-hated man who might have been a dictator but actually became a wooden bureaucrat and State pensioner. Noske suppresses the revolt, for it transpires that this has no political aims. The thirteen demands of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Council relate to rations, discipline, treatment, and not to politics. Noske was able to go home and everything could have resumed its normal course. But from the other end of the Reich came the fateful wave which was to swallow the House of Hohenzollern and the Bismarckian Reich.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE THERESIAN FIELDS

UNTIL now the question that men asked themselves in Berlin was, what would happen if Prussia should become a Republic while the South remained monarchist. On the evening of November 7th this question receives its answer.

In Bavaria, not only the workers but also the peasants are tired of the war. The Wittelsbachs lost their popularity when they failed to seize their last chance of becoming the adversaries of Berlin. The Bavarians want to break with the Kaiser, with Berlin. They want peace all the more because in these first November days the Italians appear on the Brenner and directly threaten Bavaria.

On November 7th the Munich masses stream out to the Theresian Meadows, where the annual October Fair is held. This time it is to see a graver event. The Majority Socialists, as usual, desire only to demonstrate. But the extremists Kurt Eisner and the blind peasant leader Gandorfer grasp hold of the reins. The soldiers go over to the people. The king departs from his palace by a back door. Bavaria is a republic. The next day the Chancellor telegraphs his resignation to Spa. It is the last hope of compelling the Kaiser to abdicate. November 9th dawns dark and threatening, overshadowed by the menace of strikes and revolution, uncertainty and confusion.

CHAPTER XIX

VITTORIO VENETO

ON October 24th the Allies began a great offensive between the Adriatic and the mountains of Tirol. The western front had been in movement for months, but the Austrian front had stood firm; true, it had not been heavily tested. Now the Allies set to work at this point to give the peace-decision of the Central Powers such an impetus that it should become a decision to capitulate. Up to a few days before October 24th the Austrian commanders on the Piave and in the Tirol had awaited the attack calmly. But after the 16th, after the Kaiser's manifesto to the nationalities and the self-proclaimed independence of Hungary which followed it, matters had grown sensibly worse. The summons of the Hungarian War Minister, Béla Linder, had reached the troops. The Magyar divisions demanded to be led home. They wished to defend 'the frontiers of Hungary', as the War Minister had ordered. If the War Minister was stupid enough to want to organize the strategic defence of Hungary at the political frontiers, and to abandon the advanced positions, which protected Hungary far better, why should the troops be cleverer? For days negotiations had been going on with the Hungarian divisions. The commander of the Tirol Army, Field-Marshal Archduke Joseph, the 'Hungarian' Habsburg, had been appointed by Kaiser Karl commander-in-chief of all Hungarian units. He was himself in course of closing his headquarters at Bolzano and going to Budapest. But now he was begged to return to the mountains, to go to the front again, and hold the troops there, just a few days longer,

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until the main weight of the Allied attack had spent itself.

The Italians, on this 24th of October and on the following days, were thrown back everywhere they attacked. The astonishing and unique thing happened, that an army already in inner disintegration, which was losing its front line and reserve troops by divisions, once more stood firm. The miracle of the five-day battle on the Piave and between the Piave and Brenta is greater and more amazing than the miracle of the Marne.

The Austrian front bent inward only on the middle Piave, where the British attacked. Day after day, courageous, tenacious and helped by their superior armament, they pressed on with their attack against the Magyars, Germans, Czechs and Croats who opposed them. The river-island of Papadopolis fell into their hands. The bulge that they drove in the Austrian front widened on the eastern bank of the Piave. Field-Marshal Boroevitch from this day on perceived the objective of the British attack: Vittorio. This little place in Venetia was the key to the front, which turned almost at right angles from the mountains to the plain. Its situation resembled that of Gorlitz in Galicia in an earlier campaign, where the Russian front similarly formed a right angle and where, through the attack of May 2nd, 1915, the whole eastern front began to rock. But the British were not yet through; they were still confronted by a dented, but solid line. In the whole course of the great battle the enemy had not been able to announce more than 20,000 prisoners. On October 29th, Boroevitch intended to counter-attack the English. He had surrounded them; in their bulge, with the river behind them, their position was by no means pleasant. But by the morning of the 29th the projected attack was no longer possible. The spark of mutiny had travelled from

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the Hungarian to the Slav troops. The soldiers still were not moved by any clear revolutionary purpose. Strange ideas moved in their heads. For instance, the Bosnians, élite troops of the Imperial Army who had proved their quality in four and a half years of fighting, suddenly declared that they must go home because the English were about to occupy their land. Serbian propaganda, which spread among the South Slavs this tidings of the approach of Entente troops, thus achieved its aim, even in cases where the South Slav troops felt anything but sympathy for the Entente.

In Tirol matters looked worse. Whole divisions had fallen out. As the reserves, coming up, saw the Magyar and Slav troops going back they turned back too. Even the Tirolese Edelweiss Division mutinied. Only a few reserve battalions still went up to the line, and in the last October days there remained in the trenches from the valley of the Etsch to Valsugana but a thin veil of outposts, mostly old men, Czechs, Germans, Slovenes, a few thousand men in all. But the Italians still did not venture forward.

In the meantime headquarters had ordered that all armies should be withdrawn to the frontiers of the Reich. The armies of Boroévitch moved back in excellent order, unit by unit, from the Piave to Tagliamento. But the British and Italians, at first only carefully feeling their way forward, had in the meantime inserted themselves between these retiring armies and the Tirolese front. And thus they reached the object of their operations, Vittorio Veneto, when it had long since been abandoned. But the Italians from now on named their most questionable 'victory' after the little town with the symbolic name. The prisoners of this victory were only to be provided by the next act in this catastrophe.

CHAPTER XX

VILLA GIUSTI

ON October 29th the k.u.k. Staff Captain Camillo Ruggiera — an Italian by nationality, as his name shows — left the front line south of Rovereto and went out into no-man's-land. A bugler accompanied him and a flag-bearer. The flag was white, and the bugler continually sounded the call which announces the coming of an officer with a flag of truce. Nevertheless, fire was opened from the Italian positions upon this strange and old-fashioned looking convoy. The flag-bearer was wounded. Then the Italians ceased fire.

Next day Captain Ruggiera returned without accomplishing anything. Italy declared that she could not negotiate about an armistice; she could only state her conditions. She added that she could only negotiate with the Chief of the Commission, General Weber, in person. The method used is one which was to repeat itself ten days later in the West. By one pretext or another the victor sought to gain time, to prolong the blood bath for a few days, to submerge the drowning foe completely. On the evening of October 30th Austrian emissaries with a flag of truce once more marched through the valley of the Etsch towards the Italian positions. This time the white flag was carried by a colonel, and General Weber led the delegation.

The Austrians were not immediately allowed to pass. They had to wait more than an hour. Then they were conducted through the barbed wire, put in a car with drawn

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blinds and driven first to Avio and then to Padua. The remainder of the Commission followed. The Italians refused to allow the German plenipotentiaries to take part. At noon on November 1st the delegates gathered in the Villa Giusti and were received by General Badoglio, the only Italian general who had scored a great success in the campaign — that of Gorizia in August 1916; he is a man for whom history still holds a great career and the fame of new battles. Pietro Badoglio informs the Austrians of the conditions and adds that no negotiations can be entered on. The conditions must be accepted or rejected. The Austrian Commission has been charged to accept anything and everything that is compatible with the honour of Austrian arms and the interests of Austria's allies. The Commission now feels that, considered in this light, the conditions are unacceptable. Anxious hours elapse. The delegation in the Villa Giusti was cut off from all communication with the outer world. It waits and waits. In Vienna the Kaiser wished to consult the German-Austrian State Council, whose provinces were first and foremost at stake. But the Councillors refused to take any responsibility for the armistice upon themselves. The Kaiser, Lammasch and the chief-of-staff must bear the responsibility alone. Appeals for help come continually from the front. The chaos increases from hour to hour. Armistice! Armistice! cry the army commanders, the divisional commanders, the battalion and battery commanders. When Vienna at last nerves itself to the decision that the onerous conditions must be accepted, the chief-of-staff, Baron Arz, hurries to the telephone, and calls the Chief of the Operations Department, Baron Waldstätten. The Entente conditions are to be accepted, and hostilities are forthwith to cease. The Finance Minister, Spitzmüller,

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interrupts the general and draws his attention to the fact that only an armistice has been resolved upon, not the cessation of hostilities. Andrassy holds Spitzmüller back. That is not our affair, he says. The butchery will have to stop some time.

In Schönbrunn other questions are being discussed. Where shall the Imperial Family go? Revolution stands before the door. The workers are restive and there are no trustworthy troops left. The military cadets from the Academy at Wiener Neustadt are the Kaiser's last guard.

In the Villa Giusti the delegates waited for news. They did not yet know that the Austrian troops had had the order to cease fighting. They only heard, from the Italians, that the armistice had to be accepted by November 4th. Another day passed in fruitless negotiation. In the night of November 2nd, at last, General Weber received the secret order to accept the conditions. The delegates met again. Badoglio announced that the armistice had been concluded. He wished to have fighting cease at three o'clock. Now came another hitch. An Austrian officer lost his self-control and accused the Italians of malicious procrastination; his charge was right in the spirit if wrong in the letter. Badoglio broke off the negotiations and the Austrians had to apologize. On November 3rd, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the treaty was signed. By that time the Austrian troops had already broken off hostilities everywhere. Some in good order, others in a wild confusion of man, horse and gun, hundreds of thousands surged through the narrow mountain passes to the north and north-east. The columns were dammed up by these narrow exits. And behind them came the Italians! For them the war was still on! For them it was only to end next day, on November 4th, at five o'clock in the afternoon.

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With armoured cars, cyclists, cavalry and large formations they overtook the Austrians, opened fire, cut off whole corps from their line of retreat. On the Tagliamento the Austrian commander succeeded in surviving these critical hours by skilful negotiation and a resolute bearing. In his case the booty of the Italians was insignificant. But in the Tirol hundreds of thousands of Austrians were taken prisoner. The 400,000 prisoners claimed by the Italians as the booty of Vittorio were only made during those twenty-four hours when the Austrian fire had already ceased but the Italians continued to make war. The Italian victory is falsely named. It should not be named after Vittorio, but after the Villa Giusti. This victory is unique in the history of war; it was gained against an enemy which was not fighting, against an army which in good faith believed that an armistice had been agreed.

CHAPTER XXI

NOVEMBER 9TH

THE monarchy could have been saved even after the events at Kiel, if the Kaiser had abdicated. But after the events at Munich the game was virtually lost. The people saw now how easily and bloodlessly a revolution could be made. The Social Democrats grew fearful of the masses. In North Germany it was seen that the proclamation of the Republic would not endanger, but promote the unity of the Reich. On November 8th the Chancellor continued his efforts. But in Spa no decision was reached. The Kaiser, his aides-de-camp and generals reflected and deliberated, awaited news from Berlin and from the front, but did not act. On this day the Social Democrats in Berlin decided to have done. They were losing their grip on the masses. The revolutionaries were talking big and loudly. The Independent Socialists were in touch with the soldiers in the barracks. A great opportunity might be gone in a few more hours. From the barracks of the Naumburg Rifle Regiment came a deputation to the building of *Vorwärts*, the Socialist organ. The riflemen declared themselves ready to go over to the people, but wished to be in touch with the Majority Socialists, not with the extremists. That was decisive. On November 9th Otto Wels went to the barracks, climbed on a cart and spoke to the soldiers and officers. He explained the desperate situation to them, and the difficulties arising for the Government from the stubbornness of the Kaiser. He asked them bluntly if they were going to shoot on the masses and at the

end called for cheers for the free people's state. The riflemen enthusiastically joined in, and the officers offered no resistance.

Wels hastened to Scheidemann with this tidings. The Secretary of State, who for weeks had threatened to resign, now in truth resigned. Prince Max saw his Cabinet and his policy about to collapse. He proclaimed the abdication of the Kaiser and telegraphed the news to Spa. By November 9th, at long last, a decision had been reached there. Wilhelm wished to resign as Emperor but to remain King of Prussia. Hindenburg was to become supreme commander of the German Army, the Kaiser was to remain with the Prussian troops. This dream was shattered by the news from Berlin. The troops are going over to the people; the abdication, as Emperor and as King, has been proclaimed; Ebert is Reich Chancellor!

The generals now realize what has to be done. Any further delay might imperil the army, in other words, the position of the officers' corps. The army must therefore separate itself from its Supreme Warlord. Only by this means can the army itself keep the reins in its hands. A few more anxious hours pass in the Villa Fraineuse. Then the Kaiser climbs into his Imperial train. Not towards rebellious Berlin, not towards the Spartacists, and not towards the front does this train move — but towards Holland. Wilhelm II, a private individual, reaches Amerongen in the morning of November 10th. If a last push was needed to overthrow the Hohenzollern dynasty, this flight, this desertion of the Kaiser supplied it.

Meanwhile in Berlin hundreds of thousands of people surged through the streets, knowing not whither or why, simply following an inner impulse. Speakers appeared here

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and there and clamoured for freedom, the people's state, peace. In the Reichstag the Social Democratic Party was gathered. News of demonstrations, reports about the temper of the masses arrived continually. Liebknecht has proclaimed the Republic and the masses jubilantly acclaimed him, reports one messenger. Thereupon, Philipp Scheidemann, the man of improvisations, appears on the balcony. He proclaims, and never dreams how bitterly he and his party will expiate this empty phrase: 'The people has conquered all along the line.' He calls cheers for the Republic. Hundreds of thousands respond. Triumphant, this Danton from Kassel returns to his friends within. Friedrich Ebert, red in the face, angrily accosts him: 'You shouldn't have done that! You have anticipated the decision of the National Assembly.' Perhaps Fritz Ebert, with his ineloquent loyalties and middle-class mentality, sees further at this moment than the rhetorician Scheidemann, and realizes that a dangerous course has been set, that it would be cleverer at this moment not to clutch at responsibility.

CHAPTER XXII

COMPIÈGNE

THE proceedings of the Villa Giusti now repeat themselves in even worse form in the wood of Compiègne, whither the German emissaries, after a long and tortuous journey in a coach with drawn blinds, had been brought for the armistice negotiations. General Badoglio had behaved as a victor, but as a chivalrous one. Foch is without all chivalry. He spares the German delegates no single one of the humiliations which he has long since devised. He forces them from the first moment onward to the most humiliating declarations and refuses to negotiate even about the most onerous conditions. He, the Catholic clerical, is in no wise impressed by the fact that the Catholic politician Erzberger has been sent as one of the emissaries. As an officer, he shows no consideration whatever for General Winterfeld. He names his conditions and leaves the German delegates alone in their coach.

Like the Austrians in the Villa Giusti, the Germans in the Forest of Compiègne are cut off from their homeland and from the outer world. Rumours reach them. Who is governing in Berlin? The Kaiser has been overthrown. Is Ebert in power? Are the Spartacists in power? A single source of authority is visible — Hindenburg. The army command is intact. The delegates get in touch with general headquarters. Everything must be accepted, comes the answer. On November 11th the German delegates sign the armistice, which is a capitulation. Evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine and of the bridgeheads, surrender of heavy artillery,

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of a great part of the locomotive stock, of all kinds of rolling and other stock. The starving country sees especial cruelty in the condition that even milch cows and bees have to be delivered in immense numbers.

Hopes are still reposed in Wilson and the Conference. The blame for the onerous conditions is still laid on the generals. But disillusionment is soon to come. The new people's government is burdened with a fearful load. The German Revolution came too late to save Germany, and a few days too soon to exonerate the new regime from responsibility for armistice and peace. While the Berlin worker prepares for civil war and party conflict, while the enemy occupies the German frontier provinces, while new states spring up in the south-east, the greater part of a nation of seventy million souls moves, starving, desperate and hopeless, towards a winter without a comforting Christmas Star.

PART TWO

FROM EBERT TO HINDENBURG

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PRESIDENT

FEBRUARY 28th, 1925. A superior nursing home in the west end of Berlin. The staff is accustomed alike to excitement in others and to the discreet and gentle allaying of such excitement; the end of a human life and all the pain that it evokes is but 'a case with a fatal ending' for even the most genteel of nursing homes. This one is a symphony in much white and a little green, a composition of glass, tiles, nickel, snowy linen, the pale faces of anaemic patients, the white beards of worthy professors, the green of pot plants, and floral offerings. Today a mild disquiet prevails. Behind their gleaming spectacles the eyes of the professors have lost a trifle of that indifference with which they otherwise gaze past all that is human, through skin and flesh, into the inside of the ailing body, which seems to them nothing more than a structure of cells. The quiet and comforting hands of the nurses tremble a little, the telephone in the office rings more often than is usual, and in the waiting-room many inquiries have to be answered and many distinguished visitors to be interviewed.

In one of the quiet white rooms lies Friedrich Ebert, first President of the first German Republic. A few days ago the 56-year old man was brought in here, and operated on, like hundreds and thousands before him, perhaps this time with slightly more care and pains. But they were in vain. The fever rose. The appendicitis has developed into peritonitis, and the heart has no more strength. Friedrich Ebert will

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not survive the day. All the efforts of the doctors are vain. Neither transfusions nor oxygen can help. Friedrich Ebert has been marked down by death. Only a few more hours and the newspapers of the Weimar Republic, with thick black borders, announce his end; the numerous organs of the Right, free to appear in this Republic which they do not recognize, report it in non-committal headlines. The flags sink to half-mast over the public buildings of the Reich and Prussia and the trades union offices. The Social Democrat leaders are cast down and mournful, but outside this little pale the event moves none greatly. What death did to this man may have been a hard blow, by human reckoning. But was it not, politically, but the belated Yes of destiny to a development which had long since left Friedrich Ebert behind?

Friedrich Ebert, too, belonged to the Wilhelmine era. He, too, bore the mark of that time on his forehead, the happiest that a peaceful citizen can bear in tranquil times, the unhappiest that an active participator can carry in a restless epoch — the mark of mediocrity. The time of Bismarck was for Germany the time of the great talents, of the unusual, the creative, the stimulative. The great Chancellor himself, Moltke, Roon, Krupp, Siemens, Nietzsche, Wagner, Windhorst, Bebel, Liebknecht — on the right and on the left and in the centre were great and unusual men. The Wilhelmine era marks the decline into mediocrity and dilettantism. That applies to rulers and ruled, to Right and to Left. In the Chancery, two decades after Bismarck, Bethmann sat, a colourless product of the slow-grinding civil service mill, a man honest, conscientious and cultivated, but without drive, courage or imagination. In the Social Democratic Party the great leaders, Liebknecht and Bebel, had been succeeded

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by the non-commissioned-officers, the second-class minds. Honest trades union secretaries led the mass organizations of the allegedly 'revolutionary' movement, clerks with a cultivated business style wrote the newspapers. Any men who reached above the average had been thrown out by Bebel himself when he cleansed the party of the 'revisionists' at Dresden in 1903. What remained was that office-staff of diligent party pupils from the ranks of which Friedrich Ebert himself had risen.

This man, too, with whose name the destiny of the so-called Revolution of 1918 was to be linked, had 'worked his way up the treadmill', like Bethmann, and the fact that his climb was up the ladder of trades union and party promotion, not that of the Prussian bureaucracy, made little difference. The spirit was the same, and the product was the same. Ebert's career is in no detail unusual until the moment when he received a historical summons and accepted it. It is the same in all similar cases. A man advances to a rung in the ladder where he is really useful. But the next rung brings the decision. All Napoleon's Marshals failed when they made the seemingly insignificant step from Corps Commander to Army Commander. A moment before they had shone in the fame of victories, they had been dashing, competent and trustworthy. And then suddenly they turned out to be asses, and unlucky asses at that.

Friedrich Ebert was a saddler by trade. He was from South Germany, from Heidelberg. Like all intelligent and industrious handicraftsmen of the nineteenth century he soon entered the trades union movement and the Social Democratic Party. He was on the threshold of manhood when the Socialist Act was introduced and the legendary growth of the Social Democratic Party began (it has only

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been overshadowed by the even more fantastic growth of the National Socialist Party in 1930). The great movement needed a great machine. Intelligent and courageous men were welcomed. The saddler Ebert became trade union secretary, Socialist editor, deputy. In between he probably had charge of the bar in the party club-room, as was usual. His enemies attacked him on this ground in later years. They called him 'the barman' when their other term of abuse, 'saddler's mate', lost sting. These were the same cavaliers who a decade later were to learn to worship a house-painter's mate as a demigod and to stand to attention before the former inmate of destitutes' homes.¹

The old Bebel had been born in a barracks and had never lost the barrack-square ideal, even as an anti-militarist. *Gleichschalten*² is an old Prussian custom; it derives from the parade-step.³ Bismarck, Bebel and Goebbels differ in their methods, but in their deeper selves they are akin. To speak with Oscar Wilde, 'one does it with a flattering word, one does it with a sword'. Bebel had *gleichgeschaltet* the Left. There was no room left for outstanding personalities. A Heinrich Braun could not be used and a Harden could not be tolerated; Professor Hildebrandt, who alone in 1910 correctly foresaw the development of the next twenty-five years, was excluded from the Party; there had never been room in it for Gustav Landauer. In such an atmosphere, Ebert rose rapidly. Not that he was a climber. But the wave carries the man of lighter burthen, while the heavier sinks. Ebert counted as a good party speaker and was trustworthier than Scheidemann. When Haase, Bebel's real

¹ An allusion to Hitler.

² A word always difficult to translate, meaning to coordinate, to get into step, to synchronize, to level out all differences.

³ Usually known in England as the goose-step.

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successor, found himself on August 4th, 1914, in a conflict with the majority of the Party, a dispute which later led to a split, Ebert moved automatically to the front. By 1916 he was the first man in the Party. It was a moment when this Party could have made history. But it only had 'immediate aims' and a utopian, not very seriously meant 'ultimate goal'. Everything that might happen between the morrow and the year 2000 was irrelevant.

As the Empire lay in agony Ebert became Reich Chancellor. This was a revolutionary act, executed by Berlin over the Kaiser's head. The Chancellor became overnight 'People's Commissar', and the People's Commissar then blossomed into Reich President, although this process was never properly legalized. According to the Weimar Constitution the President should have been elected by the people. But the fathers of the Constitution did not quite trust their own handiwork. They feared that the popular election might become the starting-point for counter-revolutionary moves. They therefore continually renewed the office of the provisional President.

Thus Friedrich Ebert came to reside in the Wilhelmstrasse from 1919 on. An undersized man with a big head, which might have been modelled for the middle-class 'hard hat'. The shoulders a little too high, pushing his ample paunch before him on short legs, this Reich President was not a figure that outwardly commanded respect. He did not look exactly funny, but he was by no means impressive. He talked as he looked; his speech was too full of phrases for its content, and too empty for its form to be effective.

As President, he scarcely changed his style of life. He lived in a very middle-class way in his palace, seldom invited guests, and had no idea of the way to form a circle. If he

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ever attempted a gesture greater than himself he was unlucky with it. If he, the former saddler, went riding in the Tiergarten, the Communists accused him of betraying his class. He clung to the generals and took sides with some of them against his Party, but this did not save him from being vilified as 'traitor' or gain him the protection of the courts of his Republic. When he restored Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles to its place as national anthem, nobody was satisfied — the Left because it was too nationalist, the Right because they did not want to accept anything from Ebert.

He was a man of legal ways. That Scheidemann had proclaimed the Republic on November 9th without waiting for a decision had violently angered the first man of the new Republic. He hated the social revolution like the pest, he told his friends in 1919. He wanted evolution, not subversion. His tragedy was that he, like his Party and his whole school of thought, did not perceive from which side in Germany the Revolution was coming. He too believed the old Marxist doctrine that all Revolutions must come from the Left, from that side which the old century had called Left and Revolutionary.

'The foundation stone of his policy was the idea that first of all peace with the world and democracy at home must be assured, and that only after that could economic changes be made in the direction of Socialism.' Thus writes Friedrich Stampfer about Ebert. He adds that this was also the foundation stone of Social Democratic policy, but that Ebert pursued it more resolutely and logically than the Party.

When he came to the head of the State in 1919 an attempt was made to popularize him. The youths of the Socialist

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Arbeiter Jugend (the young workers' organization) sang to their guitars:

Wilhelm der Doofe, is nach Holland geloofen,
sie ham ihm die Krone jeklaut
Ebert der helle, der Sattlergeselle,
der hat ihm die Krone jeklaut.

But Ebert was by no means wily; he was really a dull and apathetic person, gloomy and distrustful, no man of pioneering deeds and liberating decisions. He was from the working-class movement, from the ranks of a party long grown middle-class and bureaucratic, the pot-bellied look of which had appalled Max von Weber as long ago as 1905, when he contrasted the corpulent and comfortable appearance of these revolutionary officials with the flood of words they unloosed to greet the Russian Revolution.

Now Ebert lies on his deathbed. His office had helped to destroy him. The reproach of 'treason' with which his enemies had pursued him had deeply wounded him, had stung his national and social honour. He had often thought of resigning and resuming party politics, so that, free of responsibility, he would again be able to orate in the Reichstag, as he loved to do, about the eight-hour day, the sickness insurance schemes, and the constitution. Now death hurled him from a place in which he had been put by a whim of destiny.

CHAPTER II

BALANCE AND LEGACY

IN the first days of March 1925 Friedrich Ebert was buried in the cemetery at Heidelberg. A few days later the battle for the succession flared up all along the line. The struggle for the inheritance was the first great opportunity to strike the balance of a period which had been as short as it was fateful.

Two mortgages lay heavier than all else on the Germany of Weimar: the acceptance of the Peace of Versailles and the silting-up of the revolution. At the beginning of the new era stood the dangerous words that Philipp Scheidemann had called to the masses on November 9th from the Reichstag: 'The German people has conquered all along the line.' The leaders of the German Left honestly believed it at that moment. They were all ideologists; there is nothing more terrible for a country than to be governed by ideologists. The men of November 9th seriously believed that the victors would give them better peace conditions than the Kaiser's Empire from loyalty to their convictions, from motives of humanity, from enthusiasm for German democracy. They really and truly believed that the Revolution had been necessary to spare Germany the hardships of an annihilating peace. A few days later they suffered a cruel awakening from this illusion. In the forest of Compiègne there was no more talk of Wilson's points, of the messages which the President of the United States had for years been addressing to all peoples, of civilization, humanity and democracy; there Marshal Foch had the

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word, and he used it like the executioner his sword. Germany had to evacuate all land up to the Rhine, to surrender the bridgeheads, to give up her weapons and fleet, tens of thousands of railway wagons, locomotives, milch cows and much more, wrested from a starving land by the victors, to whom the reserves of the world stood open. The blockade was continued. Tens of thousands of human beings, half of them women and children, starved in this first 'peace winter' in Central Europe, or died from the effects of the blockade. The starvation-campaign was pitilessly continued.

And when at last at Versailles, in the Hall of Mirrors where on January 18th, 1871, Wilhelm I was proclaimed German Emperor, the conditions of peace were presented to the German delegation on May 7th, 1919 — after a rabid speech from Clemenceau, who abused and humiliated the vanquished — they found in the thick book with the hundreds of paragraphs that Germany must give up her entire colonial possessions, in all 2,954,905 square metres; 13 per cent of her territory; that for fifteen years her sovereign rights over the Saar Territory and the use of the Saar coal were taken from her; that the Germans, alone among the peoples of Europe, were to have no right of self-determination; that South Tirol was to come under Italian rule, and Germans in North and East and West Germany under Polish, Danish, Belgian or French rule; that Poland was to obtain the Corridor and by this means a German province was to be deprived from all land communication with the Reich; that for love of the Poles Danzig was to be severed from the Reich; that the Austrians were to be refused the right to join the Reich; that three and a half million Sudeten Germans were to be refused the right to hold a plebiscite,

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although such was conceded to the Slovenes in Carinthia, the Cassubes in Prussia and the Poles in Silesia with the object of mutilating these provinces.

Germany lost 16 per cent of her arable land, 12 per cent of her cattle, 26 per cent of her coal output, three-quarters of her crude iron output, two-thirds of her zinc output, the greater part of her potash stocks. Almost the entire mercantile marine, including all ships of more than 1600 tons, and a quarter of her small fishing craft had to be surrendered. And the nation whose economic system was thus destroyed and strangled was to pay a war indemnity, the amount of which was not fixed in the treaty. A State was to undertake to pay tribute, the total of which the victors wished only subsequently to state. When the figures ultimately became known they were astronomic. At first they were somewhere in the region of 250 milliard marks; this was then reduced to 130 milliards; and in the 'mild version' of the Young Plan they still remained at 56 milliards, or with interest and the 'unprotected annuities' about 100 milliards, a burden of tribute spread over two generations, without counting the deliveries in coal, iron, steel and other goods to the victor countries. The victors drew the well-merited reward of this senseless gamble when they ultimately obtained no more than some 20 milliards and had to pay for these themselves in the form of trade credits. If they had been content in 1919 with a round sum of 50 milliards this would probably have been paid them within a decade.

The German people were even more sensitive to the moral condemnation which the Versailles Treaty contained; it had 'deliberately' brought about the war, the great crime against mankind and the freedom of the peoples, it was 'also

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responsible for the brutal and inhuman manner in which it had been conducted'.

Could any people accept this dictate, undersign its own condemnation, without feeling wounded in its inmost soul and gravely shaken in its moral? The Foreign Minister of the Republic, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, one of the few outstanding diplomats of the Wilhelmine Reich, was for fighting and rejection. He saw a vision of a hard but glorious future. Germany must fight, he held, but must also win in the end, if she insisted on her rights and mobilized the entire strength of the nation in this struggle for existence. But to that end it would be necessary to overcome all egoistic factions, in the petty self-interest politics of parties and sects, as in business and industrial leaders, and anonymous high finance. A Revolution would be necessary, an inner, spiritual reinvigoration, and the goal must be a German Socialism which in the end would convince Europe, and would establish the laws of a new European order.

In the hot June days of 1919 the old Germany and the new grappled with each other. For a few hours it seemed as if the Socialists would grasp the meaning of this great historical hour, which was never to recur. The Reich Chancellor, Philipp Scheidemann, spoke from the heart of the nation when he declared:

This book must not become the law of the future. What hand must not wither, that should lay itself and us in these fetters? An unprecedented decline in moral standards would be the result of this treaty.

A prophetic word!

While Brockdorff-Rantzau was for rejection and Scheidemann uttered these words, Matthias Erzberger advocated

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acceptance, and gained the ear of the President. Struggle, Revolution, Overthrow, Socialism — Friedrich Ebert, honest bourgeois, shrank from great decisions. What the cheerful and ever optimistic Swabian Erzberger told him about the prospects of 'a policy of fulfilment' seemed to his honest but limited mind easier to understand than the dark visions of the tough Lower German nobleman Brockdorff-Rantzau. Friedrich Ebert had decided for the policy of fulfilment. Scheidemann went. Gustav Bauer took his place. On June 21st the German seamen at Scapa Flow sank their fleet, which lay at anchor in the Scottish harbour for delivery to the enemy. It was a last warning cry. On June 22nd the National Assembly at Weimar accepted the dictate with 237 votes against 138. On June 28th it was signed. On the same day, in Berlin, Moeller van den Bruck, with men of similar mind from Left and Right, among them the author, founded the 'June Club'. It was the germ-cell of another Germany.

Crushed by the dictate, and not even so much by the burdens of the treaty as by boundless disillusionment over the collapse of all illusions and ideologies of democracy, world solidarity, civilization, and the sanctity of treaties, the German people hardly noticed that the National Assembly in the summer of 1919 had passed a Constitution which allegedly belonged to the most democratic of the world but in fact was nothing more than a treatise of arm-chair savants, a scrap of paper, a copy of western models lacking every spark of revolutionary fervour, lacking all life and all roots in the history of the German people. It was the pride of the Ebert Republic, this constitution, and it provided the backstairs by way of which the Pretorians climbed to legal power.

BALANCE AND LEGACY

What the people wanted to know was something different. Assuming that Germans had been put in fetters by their enemies abroad, were they at least free at home? Could the monstrous burdens be borne, the work of fulfilment carried on, and the much more difficult task of a struggle for liberation accomplished, if Capitalism remained the law of national life in Germany?

Ebert's Governments promised rapid Socialization. But they made no progress. Everything remained stuck in the marshes of theory. Neither the Socialist Rudolf Wissel nor the Conservative Wigand von Moellendorff succeeded in carrying through their great proposals for a planned economy. Their ideas did not at all tally with those of the financiers and the war-profiteers and post-war-profiteers, just then appearing on the stage, who in growing measure found the ear of the new rulers.

The 'extremists of sober objectivity', as Stampfer calls his Party friends Bauer, Müller, and Robert Schmidt, had their way. Wissel was overthrown and Moellendorff was forgotten; only for the space of a heartbeat was that missed opportunity recalled to memory when in the autumn of 1937 the news came that he had ended his life from despair at the Hitler system. Together with the extremists of sober objectivity, the Barmats and Kutiskers came into the spotlight, those extremists of corruption, the vultures of the inflation, and with them, too, the Stinneses and Hugenberg, those spoilt children of German misery. In Ebert's philosophy and in the German Republic, Socialism was the last point on the agenda. Life had to give way, doctrine prevailed.

Meanwhile the victors cracked their whips continually. Interminable reparations conferences, ever new figures, new

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demands, new tricks. Disarmament commissions travelled the land, supervised the scrapping of metal, traced every rook-rifle to its source. When the Upper Silesian plebiscite resulted in a vote for Germany the victors broke their words and treaty. When Polish bands appeared in Germany no international police force stopped them, but German free corps, formed in infringement of the Peace Treaty, took over the defence of the frontiers and fought the struggle for Silesia. When Hungarian bands marched into the Burgenland, after the rendition of this German province to Austria, the victors capitulated before force and gave Oedenburg back to the Hungarians.

Deep embitterment took hold of the people. The champions of the old regime thought the Republic ripe for overthrow. Kapp formed his counter-revolutionary Government, the Ehrhardt Naval Brigade marched into Berlin on March 13th, 1920. Ebert fled with his Government to Stuttgart. But it now transpired that Germany really was in a state of revolution. The general strike broke out spontaneously. The people did not want to revert to Kapp and Lüttwitz and Wilhelm II. For five days millions were on strike and then the spectre vanished. A bloody epilogue followed, which deprived the Republic of its last chance. Using those very Free Corps which had just tried to seize the State and failed, the Government crushed the rising of the miners in the Ruhr and Central Germany. But it did nothing to reap advantages from the victory over the old regime. It just muddled along on its path of 'revolutionary development'.

The German economy broke down. The printing presses thundered day and night, the mark crumbled and crashed. Germany's social foundations disappeared. The middle

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classes were dispossessed and became demoralized. In the years 1922-23 the spiritual foundations of the reign of terror of 1933-34 were laid. A people was proletarianized: after the inflation only 10 per cent of the German people earned more than 200 marks monthly and only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of Germans owned a fortune of more than 10,000 marks. Hatred boiled up against the foreigners who travelled the land and bought up everything for a song. Atavistic instincts broke out — hatred of the Jews and the thirst for vengeance — when, out of the ruins of the inflation, the great fortunes of the hyenas of the inflation arose, those newly-arrived financial jugglers from Budapest and Lodz. Moral standards melted away; everything was tolerated. A people that until then had been correct, conscientious, honourable and tranquil, learned to rob, to receive and to swindle; it felt itself to be surrounded, believed itself to have been handed over to dark forces, and mutinied against every law of society. Faster and faster rolled the mark downhill. This is the chart of the dizzy descent of the German middle classes into the abyss:

Middle of June 1922	320
End of June 1922	353
End of July 1922	538
End of August 1922	1,426
January 1923	18,000
February 1923	27,900
May 1923	47,700
June 1923	110,000
July 1923	349,000
August 1923	4,700,000
10 September 1923	50,700,000
20 September 1923	182,000,000

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5 October 1923	600,000,000
10 October 1923	2,975,000,000
20 October 1923	12,000,000,000
25 October 1923	65,000,000,000
1 November 1923	130,000,000,000
2 November 1923	320,000,000,000
5 November 1923	420,000,000,000
8 November 1923	630,000,000,000

and so on, until at last the bottom was reached:
4,200,000,000,000.

CHAPTER III

THE DEMOCRATIC FAÇADE

FRIEDRICH EBERT lay on his bier; for the first time a President of the German Republic (his official title 'Reichspresident') was to be elected according to the provisions of the Constitution of August 11th, 1919. The entire adult population, some 40 million men and women, was to vote. The professors of Weimar had borrowed the people's-election of a President from the American Constitution. The President elected by the people was to receive a higher authority in relation to the Reichstag, the parties and the particularist forces. To that end, his election had to come from the people itself. But the constitution-drafters of Weimar had rejected, as undemocratic, the American system of delegate-electors. The people itself was to defile before the ballot box. The original intention, also, was probably that the Reichspresident should be a man above party, a 'personality' and not a professional politician. In the year 1919 there had been lively discussion of the question, who should administer this high office, which carried with it certain far-reaching powers, above all the supreme authority over the fighting services and, under the celebrated Article 48, the possibility of a temporary dictatorship.

In the year 1923, when everything was at sixes and sevens in the Reich, Ebert had made use of Article 48 and of the Reich executive. Strangely, the Socialist Ebert had used his powers not against the Right, but against the

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Left. The Left Governments in Saxony and Thuringia had been removed, the Reichswehr had occupied Saxony, and no finger had been laid upon Bavaria, the former hotbed of reaction and of movements antagonistic to the Reich. The Putsch of November 9th, 1932, Adolf Hitler's premature and ill-judged attempt to seize power, had been suppressed, not by the Reich, but by Conservative forces in Bavaria.

The Chancellor with whom Ebert had survived the autumn of 1923 and the inflation crisis was Gustav Stresemann, the man of big business, the exponent of a moderately reactionary, nationalist-liberal, and constitutional monarchist school of thought. Now the question at issue was, who should inherit that power which Ebert had so seldom and so sparingly used, and then not for the good of the German Republic, and still less for the good of the Social Democratic Party, from which he himself came and to which he nominally belonged until his death.

In the year 1919 several 'non-party' candidates had been spoken of. The old names now cropped up again, chief among them that of Gerhart Hauptmann. In the pacifist-minded and liberal-minded Republic it seemed a good thing to make a concession to the phrase 'A people of poets and thinkers'. It was felt to be obligatory that the Presidency should be offered to a poet. But the idea never became more than an idea. It was difficult to find in Germany a poet with enough political feeling to undertake an office which after all was a political one. Other names were mentioned, those of scholars, economists, philosophers. But it now transpired that the Constitution-drafters of 1919 had had their heads in the clouds. That man seemingly did not exist who should stand 'above parties' and be at once suitable to lead, and if necessary to lead in his own authority, a people

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of sixty millions. The Constitution had similarly forgotten to provide for a non-party selection and presentation of candidates. After some manœuvring, both Right and Left found themselves in the same dilemma. The men of the Right, in so far as they were well known and suitable for the post, seemed to be too much tainted through their past and their all-too-obvious affection for the old regime. Those men of the Left who might claim to count as 'non-party' were either men-of-letters and poets well known only to a small circle or they were Jews and on that account ineligible.

Thus, after some hesitation, recourse was had once more and after all to candidates of the political parties. The electoral campaign and the first vote brought with them the parade of the political groups of the Republic, and the casual observer, contemplating this march past of the candidates and their parties, may think to see in it the image of the political and mental composition of Germany at that time. In reality, this was but the façade of the Republic, the surface of a deep pool which did not yet show how different and how seething it was in its depths.

The Socialists, who up to this time had supplied the President, could not bring themselves to vote for a man of the centre right at the start, in the first vote. They offered the Prussian Premier, Otto Braun, as Ebert's successor. Otto Braun had a good name. He was one of the few men on the German Left to whom energy and the will to act were attributed. This East Prussian of peasant stock with the ponderous head, the sharply featured face, the tranquil and firm gaze, impressed even his enemies. The Right had invented nicknames, designed to deride, for most of the Republican politicians. These names, when they rose above

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the level of pothouse abuse, always carried with them something of that superiority which the strong and pugnacious feel for the weakling. But when they called Otto Braun 'the Red Tsar of Prussia' there was nothing malicious in the phrase, but admiration for a man who had risen from a woodworker to Premier, who had not changed in any way and had nevertheless won through. Otto Braun knew how to deal with men and problems. His collaboration with the Catholic Centre and the Democrats in Prussia; his reforms in the administration, the cultural activities and the economy of the greatest German Federal State; his development of the Prussian 'Schupo', a militarily-organized police force which represented, alongside the army, a very strong executive instrument: all these show Otto Braun as a statesman of respectable quality. The Social Democrats, who had few popular men, expected to achieve the maximum of success through Braun's candidature, though they knew that, like all other candidatures in the preliminary canvass of the nation, it could lead to nothing but a counting of votes without any decisive force.

The Centre put forward Wilhelm Marx, a man from Western Germany. This Marx was one of the mediocre figures of the great Catholic Party, to say the best. He lacked all those qualities which had especially and always marked out Centre leaders—the diplomatic polish, the astuteness and knowledge of the world, the temperament of a Josef Wirth or even of a Stegerwald. The Centre, for that matter, could probably have done better by putting Wirth forward as candidate, but it is most characteristic of this election, which was the prelude to the great drama of the Weimar Republic, that they were already looking sideways at the Right, already asking themselves, which

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candidate is likely to be just tolerable for the solid burgher? Wilhelm Marx seemed to be that man. He was so colourless that he had no real enemies — and no really enthusiastic friends, for such only belong to the man who also does not lack enemies!

The Bavarian People's Party clearly thought that even Wilhelm Marx was too emphatically 'Left' for the first canvass. It therefore put forward its own leader as candidate, that Herr Held whose career was to find a sudden and unheroic end in 1933. The Democrats after some indecision chose the philosopher Willi Hellpach, a South German and a scholar of that rare but interesting German type which combines the celebrated German diligence in research with an agreeable appearance, a worldly bearing and a flair for world politics. Of popularity, Hellpach enjoyed just as little as any other professor who plied politics.

The parties of the Right were in an even more difficult position, because they tried to reach agreement among themselves about a joint candidate. This man must be neither Republican nor declared monarchist, neither reactionary nor progressive, neither Junker nor tradesman, neither industrialist nor petty citizen. He was to embody, in human form, that ideal which found expression in the flag of the German mercantile marine — black-white-red with a black-red-gold inlet in the top corner.¹ (The new President, incidentally and digressively, was caused much worry by this flag when the Luther Cabinet ordered that all overseas missions of the German Reich were to hoist it

¹ This flag was one of the many compromises of the troubled Weimar Republic. The German mercantile marine, which cherished the tradition of the German Imperial Navy, sunk at Scapa Flow, could not be prevented from retaining the old black-white-red flag, but as a concession — a very small concession — to the times a tiny republican tricolour was superimposed on one corner.

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alongside the black-red-yellow flag of the State. This was one of the few occasions on which the German Left, with the Socialists in the van, showed spirit. They were willing to forget the lost Revolution and the lost opportunity of Socialism, but were resolved to fight for 'the old colours'.)

The united parties of the Right at last found in the Chief Mayor of Duisburg, Jarres, a suitable candidate who displayed all colours. His many-sidedness and desire to please everybody were, however, simultaneously the guarantee that he would possess no great power of attraction. His only opponent from the Right camp was the 'World War General' Erich von Ludendorff, who was put forward by the National Socialist movement. This party still suffered from the ill-effects of the unsuccessful Putsch of November 9th, 1923; it was divided among itself, had no clear aims, and seemed almost an anachronism in that Germany, which was basking in the Indian Summer of a last wave of capitalist mock-prosperity. So deceptive may surface impressions be which are gathered from single episodes in a great historical process.

But these were not all the candidates put forward by the German parties. The Communists also wanted to be represented and presented the former Hamburg dock-worker Ernst Thälmann, nicknamed Teddy, a crude and most mediocre agitator, whose loyal and sheeplike response to each and every change of course signalled from the engine-room of the Komintern earned him the permanent post of Party leader and at the end the unhappy lot of a permanent prisoner in Hitler's concentration camps.

After the first vote, which of course brought no decision, the candidates and parties stood in the following order:

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Jarres	10,787,870	votes
Braun	7,836,676	„
Marx	3,988,659	„
Thälmann	1,885,778	„
Hellpach	1,582,414	„
Held	990,036	„
Ludendorff	210,968	„

The electors had voted for parties, not personalities. The mediocre bureaucrat and party politician Marx received twice as many votes as the philosopher Hellpach, Herr Held nearly five times as many as the 'World War General', the agitator Thälmann, who was but a pawn in the great game of the Komintern, nevertheless took fourth place in this table of popularity and political importance. As the second vote was soon to show, such a counting of heads revealed little of the real distribution of forces. After the first vote it seemed clear beyond doubt that the German Republic still had a Left majority. For the 'Weimar Coalition' of Socialists, Democrats and Centre alone counted some 13,500,000 votes, that is, substantially more than the Reichsblock (Jarres) and Ludendorff, who together received just 11,000,000. Even if the Bavarian People's Party, which stood nearer to the Centre than to the Junkers, were subtracted from the one and added to the Reichsblock, this still remained 1,500,000 votes behind the Weimar Coalition. But if the votes of the Communists were added to the Republican total this amounted in all to 15,250,000 votes, as against the 11,000,000 of the Right. Was not the Republic therefore still remarkably solid, in spite of inflation, Hitler Putsch, several attempted Communist risings, civil war, the dispute about reparations, and fearful moral defeats? Could it ever be shaken? Was there any other

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problem to be faced than the one of pure tactics and prestige; what man should the Weimar Coalition put forward as its compromise candidate for the second vote? The new man was in any case sure of his majority, so that in essentials all seemed already to have been decided.

The senselessness, in politics, of the beloved play with figures and mechanical dimensions has seldom been more clearly revealed than in these weeks. The decisive factors lie in quite another sphere. Several million voters abstained from this first canvass, which was but a counting of heads that to many Germans seemed meaningless. These abstinentes formed the reserve from which new forces were to be derived for the second vote. The doctrinaire democrats of the Left had — and still have today — the standing description of 'indifferent' for these non-voters, for the great army of those who cannot by everyday slogans be brought to the ballot box. It is false, or mostly false. They are not only the indifferent and stupid who stand aside; they are often the embittered, the resentful, the disgusted. Often they are those who wait, those whose turn has yet to come. They stand aside because they will not allow themselves to be impressed by transmitted political models, because they find nothing on the menu to suit them, because they have no interest in the game on the surface. The façade does not move them; they only utter their word when greater and deeper things are touched.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECRET IN THE DEEPS

WE have contemplated the façade of the Germany of 1925 as it looked to its contemporaries during the first canvass of the German people for the election of a new President.¹ We have had the parties and their leaders march past us. We have recorded the problems which preoccupied governments, Reichstag, Reichs-President, the economic leaders, and the parties. That was all surface. In the depths was effervescence; there, below, another Germany was awakening. A man must know this 'secret Germany' if he wish to understand the path that led from Ebert to Hindenburg and from Hindenburg to Hitler. Future historians will need to study this secret Germany in the deeps if they wish to find out why the Weimar Republic died, why the path from Hindenburg led, not to the Hohenzollerns but to Hitler.

That which ripened in Germany between 1920 and 1933 had its roots in the period before the World War. It began with the German Youth Movement. This had little or practically nothing in common with movements in other countries which may appear outwardly akin. That youth began to wander, to practise sport, to rebel against certain obsolete methods of education — all this was a universal thing, and was not decisive. Such youth movements may

¹ The system laid down by the Weimar Constitution was to hold a first vote, and if no candidate received an *absolute* majority over all others at this (a practical impossibility in the Germany of 1925), to hold a second vote, at which the candidate receiving a *bare* majority over the next highest would become President.

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be diverted into humanist and patriotic organizations — Baden-Powell did this — and there denaturalized and tamed. Germany, too, had her boy scouts. But the German 'Wandervögel'¹ is another thing, and worlds apart is it when Anglo-Saxon boy scouts stream together for a jamboree and German Youth Leaguers meet on the Hohenmeissner. The German Youth Movement had from its beginnings a revolutionary character. It was the rebellion of youth against the whole social form of the 'Second Reich', against Wilhelm II, as later against Ebert or Stresemann. Here were hundreds of thousands of young people thrilled through and through by a premonition of what was to come, who lived in a great expectation and a great denial. They wished to pledge themselves in advance to that future, and to know nothing of their present.

The prophets of the Youth Movement were not at first to be found in the camp of the Right. That they finished, politically, on the Right, was but a trick of destiny, played upon the Youth Movement. They just sympathized with the political Opposition of the day, which was until 1918 the Left, and after 1919 the Right. But among the pioneers of that which was in 1933 to convulse the world were such pronounced extremists of the Left as the South German Jew Gustav Landauer, who in 1919 was killed by soldiers as a member of the Bavarian Red Government in Munich. He was of those few who with the premonitory force of the ancient prophets felt — and felt deeply in his Jewish soul — the coming of the great universal tempest, and foretold it. From the nineties onwards, Landauer carried on his struggle against Marxism and Liberalism, for a society built on the model of the Christian middle ages, a 'League

¹ Wander-bird.

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of Leagues'. From Landauer came the idea of seeking precedents for a German Revolution in the national history of Germany, and particularly in the peasant wars. Is it a coincidence that Gerhart Hauptmann at the same time wrote his *Florian Geyer*, the tragedy of the German peasant revolution of 1525? And is it a coincidence that Hauptmann's drama was a failure in Wilhelmine Germany and interested the society of 1900 not at all, whereas it was revived and performed with great success after the World War?

The Germany of Wilhelm II was superficial, arrogant, inwardly hollow, without faith, without the courage for great decisions; it was parvenu-like. The youth of that Germany set its face against it, against its society, against the growing wealth which was swallowing the ancient virtues, against the mendacity of a petty bourgeois existence, against a jumpy but aimless foreign policy made by dilettantes and business men, against the theatrical mask, the pomp of speeches and costumes. It set its face against the lifeless schools and the ossified system of education, it sought new values and found them in the old, eternal values — nature, tradition, work. Opposition against the bourgeois clothing of the day, against frock-coats and 'stand-up collars', against long trousers and ceremonial hats, against 'hair-dressing' fashions, and against the whole middle-class conception of pleasure-taking, with its ugly drinking and pothouse customs — all this is but the outer expression of a movement which has much deeper roots. It repeats the history of the French Revolution, when the campaign was one against pigtails and kneebreeches, buckled shoes and lace collars.

About the turn of the century Houston Stewart Chamber-

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Iain, the germanized Anglo-Saxon and son-in-law of Richard Wagner, wrote his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, the great popularization of Gobineau's racial theories. About the same time Langbehn, the admirer of Nietzsche, wrote his book about the Rembrandt-German. In another field, and yet in the same category, lies Poppert's novel of enlightenment, *Helmut Harringa*, which was distributed in hundreds of thousands about the year 1910, a book which fought against alcoholism among German youth and the German proletariat, against the brothel system, and for the ideal of 'purity'. This, too, was a symbol, and so was the enormous success which Gustav Frennsen had with his *Jörn Uhl*, the story of a student from a peasant family, and his *Hilligenlei*, which transposed the story of Christ to the Friesian lands. Today Frennsen is in the German Evangelical movement.

The Austrian Rudolf Hans Bartsch said the same thing in South German: his *Twelve from Styria* are students and artists, groping, struggling young people in a lifeless time, and his *Lukas Rabesam* is a romance with a confused religious philosophy running through it. Deeper lie the meditative mind and love of nature of Hermann Löns, the singer of the North German heaths, who fell in France in 1914; the youth of Germany sang his songs and consumed his tales from 1910 to 1930. The geographer Michaelis, killed in Flanders in 1914, is the hero of another widely-read book by Frennsen, *Peter Mohr's Journey to the South West*. In this book are found new signs: the colonial problem, 'the people without living-space', the romance of Africa, and the first description of modern mechanized war.

Enough of examples! One could also cite the extremist poets of the 'Aktion' group; Stefan George and the 'Kreis',

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Gustaf Wyneken, the school reformer; Hans Blüher, the prophet of 'manly eroticism' and the 'League of man'. They all belonged to the 'Encyclopaedists of the German Revolution' and 90 per cent of them at first stood on the Left.

In 1914 this youth of Germany, which in 1913 on the Hohenmeissner had sworn to shape its life according to its own ideas and ideals, went to war. It formed the main contingent of the volunteer force which, faultily trained and organized in five army corps, was sent into action in November 1914 in Flanders. At Langemarck these young men fell in thick swathes as, singing 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles', they charged without cover against British machine guns. 'Langemarck, the sacrificial way of the German youth' was in 1925 still one of the most passionately disputed symbols of Germany, one of the questions which could not be answered in figures, which the foreigner does not understand, and which nevertheless belongs to the essential story of this Germany between Ebert and Hindenburg, so much so indeed, that this Germany cannot be understood without it. The liberal Left tried repeatedly to make of the 'murdered children of Langemarck' a rationally developed argument against the army command and the monarchy. And each time the youth of Germany regarded this attempt as sacrilege, as a slander of the dead, as a defamation of the nation. Students, youth associations, and ex-soldiers' organizations repeatedly honoured the dead youngsters of Langemarck and portrayed them as the pioneers of a coming new Germany, of a 'Third Reich'.

And the Left pilloried each of these commemorations as reactionary agitation.

What did these young Germans of Langemarck want?

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None can say exactly; they themselves only felt, and did not know, just what they wanted. There is only general agreement that they did not die for Wilhelm II and his Reich of outer splendour, or for the policy of trusts and banks, but rather for the vision of another Germany which should come after them. The German Youth of 1925 sees in 1914 not merely the beginning of a war, but also the beginning of a Revolution. 'The first wave of the Revolution, the field-grey Revolution' it is called later in the National Socialist literature of the Brothers Strasser. Germany, they argue, then rose, not only to defend herself, but also against herself, against her forms, for a deep transformation. When in 1918 the Kaiser fled, this seemed a logical end to the old mendacious era. But when after him the Republic of Ebert came, the caricature of a Gironde, indeed the caricature of a dictatorial government, then the disillusioned fled from politics to other distractions — to labour, as students in the factories; to the free corps, as adventurers and soldiers of fortune; to the outer world as globe-trotters and explorers; and as sectarians to the most varied or most ridiculous societies, associations and leagues for vegetarianism, health-praying, Bible research, naked bathing, water divining, spiritualism and the like more. Hundreds of thousands of them were submerged in these sects in the years 1920-30; they became eccentric, fanatical, dull, but had this in common, that they were all remote from movements on the surface. They lived in summer-house colonies and allotments, in settlements in the wood or in the reservations of the nudists, who also had hundreds of thousands of members in the Germany of those years.

These reserves had now to be mobilized for the election of the Reichs-President. The Left had overlooked them

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quite, the Right almost. Now a call was to reach them for the first time.

The fantastics and adventurers had in the meantime been followed by new pioneers, steeled in war and revolution, the struggle for an existence and the first political engagements. They too derived in part from the pre-war period, but the greater number of them came from the trenches. They present more clearly the picture of the coming Germany.

Two men must first be named of those who formed the picture of German youth in 1930. They are Oswald Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck. Spengler had during the war published the first volume of his great work, *The Decline of the West*, but his name only became known after the war, and his teaching popular. The publication *Prussianism and Socialism*, which appeared in 1919, and was cheaper, handier and easier to come by than the great philosophical work, did more than this latter to make Spengler's ideas common property among the young generation and the men returned from the war. Spengler is distinguished by his combination of gloomy fatalism and cold resolution, by his freedom from illusions and his will to action, and just these qualities appealed to the men from the trenches and the students at the universities. They had all turned their backs on the past, had given up once and for all the splendour, the wealth and the seeming beauty, the serenity, the cultivated well-being and the mentality of the old time, but they still wanted to give pattern and meaning to their poverty and to the need of a declining world.

Spengler's slogan, 'Prussianism is Socialism', and his idea of the ordered State fell on fruitful ground. His following still was not exclusively and clearly of the Right.

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Left extremists like the 'International League of Battle', founded by the philosopher Leonard Nelson, took over many of his ideas, for instance, his theory of the *élite*, which should be bred and trained, his conception of the supremacy of the intellect, which the Hitlerists abandoned, etc. Spengler spoke for Europe and the white world; Moeller van den Bruck above all for Germany herself. True, his book, *The Third Reich*, contains the phrase 'We were Teutons, we are Germans, we shall be Europeans', but only an insignificant section of his followers grasped the great European mission of Germany as he foresaw it — a mission which may develop to the good or ill of Europe. His seductive phrases — for instance, that about the 'Third Reich' itself — and his views about the proletariat, the parties, the principle of republicanism, found a wide hearing. Oswald Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck! The author will never forget that fruitful discussion in Heinrich von Gleichen's 'June Club' when the Pessimist and the Optimist of the West expounded their visions of the coming decades. The two conceptions were opposed to each other and yet attuned to each other and complementary to each other, so that all of us, moved by this moment, solemnly swore to devote our lives to the realization of these visions.

How near together the rebels of the Right and Left were was shown in 1923, when the Bolshevik Radek publicly acclaimed the sacrifice of the patriotic German terrorist Schlageter¹ and when Count Reventlow and Ruth Fischer debated the common aims of the Bolsheviks and the Folkists²

¹ Shot by the French for sabotage acts during the occupation of the Ruhr.

² The Folkists, afterwards swallowed up by the Nazis, were the most extreme reactionaries of the Right in Germany after the World War.

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in public meetings in Berlin. Even after the inflation crisis had been overcome the sympathy between the two camps was great enough, or the hatred of the 'common enemy', liberal democracy, strong enough, for the Communists in practice to bring about Hindenburg's election to the Presidency and the defeat of the candidate of the Weimar Coalition. Without the indirect support of the Komintern, Hindenburg would not have become President.

Among the followers of Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck — the second of these, incidentally, ended his life in the fateful year 1925 — were Ernst Jünger, Otto Strasser, Herbert Blanck, Ernst Nickisch, Richard Schapke, Hans Schwarz, Ernst von Salomon, Friedrich Hielscher, F. W. Heinz, Rudolf Böhmer. The books and writings of these men were the beacons and signals of a Revolution which was already fermenting in the depths, but of which nothing was seen, unless it was deliberately ignored, by those on the surface, for instance the 'Intelligentsia' which had grouped itself round the Jewish publishing houses of Mosse and Ullstein and had fitted itself with blinkers. To these books belong *The Revolution from the Right*, *The Inheritance of the Disinherited*, *We Seek Germany*, *Rebirth of the Reich*, *The Structure of German Socialism*, *The Rule of the Inferior*, van Emsen's *Adolf Hitler and the Future*, *the Demons*, *the Revolution about God*, and many others. The periodical *The Deed* then began to grow rapidly in the number of its readers and in the clarity and sharpness of its ideas. A few years later Ferdinand Fried wrote his *End of Capitalism*. But poets and novelists also heard the heartbeat of a new time and proclaimed their knowledge: Frank Thiess, Fritz Reck-Malleczewen, Friedrich Jünger, Hans Grimm, Erich Erwin Dwinger, Hans Fallada. Ernst Gläser and Franz von

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Unruh, too, and Schauwecker, and again and ever again Stefan George foretold the great change of which the political parties, the government departments and the newspaper offices felt and knew nothing and would even in 1932 still know and feel nothing, which the emigrant leaders of the Republic even in 1937, as they looked back, would still consider a strange and unaccountable happening.

CHAPTER V

THE 'SAVIOUR'

THE first vote, four weeks after Ebert's death, left two possibilities open. Either the compromise-candidate of the Weimar Coalition would win, who had the best chances according to the figures of the first canvass, or the Right would succeed in stirring up the mass of abstinent voters, the deeper, unknown Germany. This last had still no clear aim and no acknowledged leader, no clearly defined ideology, far less a programme. The party leaders of the Right, and their backers and prompters in the trusts and clubs, still knew nothing of the new Germany that was to come. They were confronted, as they believed, by a task which was one of electoral tactics and organization; they needed to bring a few million non-voters to the ballot box and to see that these electors voted for the candidate of the Reichsblock. The second was easier than the first. The Left had almost worn itself out. It would not be able to muster many more votes for the joint candidate than for the individual candidates of the first canvass. Any electors who might still be brought to the ballot box would in all probability vote for the man of the Right. But what man was there who could be put forward by the Right, a man widely known, whose name would have enough magic in it to move the dully indifferent, the embittered, resigned, small citizen, the sullen young men, the men of tomorrow, to vote? The gentlemen of the Reichsblock knew that Herr Jarres was not this champion. They knew that their

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political leaders and big business magnates, the Hugenburgs and Westarps and Krupps and Vögelers, must not be offered to the masses. The Crown Prince was not suitable for a candidate; his style of living appealed little to the opinions and taste of the Conservative electors. Under the presidency of Fritz von Loebell and counselled by the wily old Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, the gentry of the Reichsblock deliberated, and soon their choice was made. The solution of the riddle was simple, it was indeed obvious. There was but one candidate with whom the Right could win. This candidate was called Paul von Beneckendorff und Hindenburg, General Field-Marshal. The difficulties began with the second question: would the General Field-Marshal, who was in his 78th year, accept the candidature, would he expose himself to the risk of defeat?

The recruiting officers set to work, Loebell and Oldenburg-Januschau and Tirpitz and Hugenberg. It was not necessary to win over the electors, they would come of their own accord, but first of all the General Field-Marshal had to be enlisted.

He sat in Hanover, without ambition, in enjoyment of an occasional ovation from enthusiastic admirers. He was nearly eighty, but he was the most popular man in Germany.

The outer world, both before and after this election, frequently laughed at Germany for electing a retired general, and a defeated one at that, to be President of the Republic. But even in countries where republicanism and democracy make more appeal than they do to the character of the German, old soldiers have always been popular. They meant (and mean) more to the masses of small folk than the men of science, of the arts, of politics. Politicians? Why, everyone knows, and above all everyone believes

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that they are just business men whose incomes are difficult to check, fickle, big-mouthed, vain and tricky. But an old general has his pay or his retired pay, he has climbed decently, rung by rung, up the ladder of his career, until he has reached the top, he has seen good service and bad, his account in the ledger of history is open for all to see and in it debit and credit are shown with well-known and easily legible entries — Tannenberg, Warsaw, Masuren, Lodz. Marshal MacMahon suffered heavier defeat in 1870 than Hindenberg in 1918; he had capitulated on the field of battle and his earlier career had no great triumph to show like that of Tannenberg, but only such deeds of arms as those of Magenta and Malakoff ('cheap successes', Schlieffen's scholars in the German General Staff would call these). Nevertheless, MacMahon was elected President of the Third Republic by the French. Wellington, a victorious general, it is true, was undoubtedly more popular and more highly esteemed in England than was Byron. Kitchener would presumably have defeated G. B. Shaw, and Stalin knows full well why he had Tuchatschewski shot and therewith indicated to the army, who had the exclusive right to popularity. It was not always the brainy strategists, on the contrary it was nearly always the bluff old fire-eaters, with heads like tobacco boxes and moustaches like sergeant-majors, the braggarts and swaggerers, who enjoyed really great popularity — Suvaroff, Blücher, Benedek, the afore-said MacMahon, and finally our Hindenburg.

What Hindenburg meant for the average German ought to be understood — and ought in 1925 to have been understood. He was a symbol, a dummy, to which everything attached itself that still survived of Prussianism, militarist romanticism, and primitive hero worship. Before 1914 the

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Germans, in so far as they feared war at all, only feared the Russians. They felt themselves far superior to the French — or at any rate the people thought this, the soldiers held a different view. But the Russians, the Cossacks! Cold shivers ran down the German burgher's back when he thought of the terrors of a Russian invasion. August 1914 seemed to confirm the worst of these fears. The Russians drove across the East Prussian frontier with two armies, they compelled the German Army of General Prittwitz to retreat at Gumbinnen, they neared the Vistula. Then the saviour appeared — Hindenburg! His name was in everyone's mouth, his picture appeared on the bowls of pipes and coffee-pots, on military calendars and on the hoardings. In the towns great wooden statues were erected with the broad and shapeless countenance of the General Field-Marshal; and the patriotic population drove nails into them, for the benefit of the Red Cross or some other social organization, until they grew into 'Iron Hindenburgs'. The victor of Tannenberg became overnight the most popular man in Germany, and he remained so. Historical research has plucked the petals from the flower of the 'Saviour's' services. Ludendorff himself, the old gentleman's chief-of-staff, General Hoffmann, the head of the Operations Department, Delbrück, the most eminent war historian of Germany, have pointed out again and again that the man who in August 1914 was fetched from his retirement at Hanover and sent to East Prussia as chief of the obstreperous Ludendorff (Ludendorff was appointed first and dispatched in a special train from the West to East Prussia, and Hindenburg was subsequently chosen, Ludendorff being telegraphically informed that he could pick up his chief at Hanover), that the Saviour and Victor

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was in reality but a dummy, a decorative figure without insight or influence. But the people needs heroes, and it desires that these heroes, equipped with higher but nevertheless comprehensible talents, should work miracles. When in 1914, in the West, that great deed of arms was not forthcoming which might have been bracketed with Sedan, Tannenberg offered a welcome peg for the romantic imagination of the small man. With the help of the Press, he adorned the picture of the battle, invented the legend of the marshes of which Hindenburg had cunningly availed himself to lure and destroy the Russians, invented the further story that Hindenburg had opposed the draining of these marshes even before the war and that the farsighted man had on this account been dismissed.

Men told each other — and in the week before the election all this was brought out and retold — that Hindenburg had for ages cherished the heart's desire to be given the command in East Prussia, that he had gone each year to those non-existent marshes and prepared everything, that he had, as it were, sketched out the battle before it happened. It was all untrue. The Masurian Lakes were no marshes, nobody had ever wished to drain them nor had Hindenburg ever wished to hinder this. He had never held an East Prussian command for any length of time, but rather in Central Germany, and if he went there, he went to shoot. The plan of operations for the Battle of Tannenberg was drawn up by General Max Hoffmann, the battle was fought by Ludendorff, and the independent decisions of individual corps commanders, like François and Below, developed it into a destructive blow. But the small man has no interest in the history of war; he likes heroes and legends.

Now the Reichsblock appealed to this man in the back-

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ground, to all non-voters, to all un-political or anti-political people. What, withhold a vote from that man who delivered the Prussians from the Russian plague? The wonder-worker of Tannenberg, the kindly old gentleman of Hanover, to whom the whole nation owes its thanks? Politics or no politics, every man must vote for Hindenburg! These are the slogans and this is the temper of the masses to the right of the Weimar Coalition. Every soul in Germany knows the name of Hindenburg and the countenance of the General Field-Marshal. Towns have been re-named after him, children have been given Hindenburg as their first name, this name has been given to everything, great and trivial. And now he is to save Germany once more!

From what?

That was difficult to say. Inflation was receding in the distance, the reparations problem had entered the stage of negotiation, the Communists and the Folkists alike had had their fangs drawn and their claws clipped, the Reichstag elected in December 1924 had an overwhelming majority of the moderate parties against the extremists — but it also had, in case of need, a majority of the Right, which was in the saddle. The first thing the new President was to do for the salvation of the Germans was to secure the gigantic profits which big industry in the Ruhr had made out of the inflation—700,000,000 marks. But from what was the nation at this moment to be saved? That was all one; the chief thing was that the 'Saviour' was come, a task for him would offer itself soon enough. From the Jews, from Bolshevism, from the Jesuits, from the Freemasons, the parties, the French, the capitalists, from something-or-other shall Hindenburg certainly save his Germans once more.

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The mentality is illuminating. That it was possible proves one thing — that in Germany that temper prevailed which inspires nature before the storm. Before the faintest sign of the coming hurricane is seen the animals are busy betaking themselves to safety, restlessly and tirelessly preparing for something of which they have a premonition, though man remarks nothing. The diligent antheap Germany noticed in 1925 that something was under way. Nobody knew that three fat years of illusory prosperity, then a gigantic economic crash, and finally a political revolution would follow. But there was a dark feeling of foreboding, and men cried for a saviour.

The ancient in Hanover capitulated to this mood. At the last moment he accepted the candidature. For ten days the electoral campaign raged throughout Germany; true, Hindenburg himself took no part in it. The Right had an easy task. A name and a face did their work for them. More was not needed. Polemics were superfluous; it sufficed to denounce as treason and Bolshevism the criticisms of Hindenburg's martial fame ventured by the Left.

The German people voted on April 26th. The General Field-Marshal received 14,655,000 votes, not quite a million more than Marx, who obtained 13,751,615. But the majority of Germans actually voted against Hindenburg. For Herr Thälmann also received 1,931,151 votes. Without the Communists Hindenburg could not have become President.

What would have been different if, on April 26th, 1925, Herr Wilhelm Marx had taken the place that Friedrich Ebert had vacated? Probably little. Marx would, like Hindenburg, have formed a Cabinet of the Right in 1925, in 1928 he would have summoned a Social Democrat and

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in 1930 a Centre politician to be his Chancellor. In 1930 he would have dissolved the Reichstag; after the electoral landslide of September 1930¹ he too would have needed to govern with 'Presidial Cabinets' and 'emergency decrees'. And in the spring of 1932 he would hardly have been able to devise a means of preventing Adolf Hitler from becoming Reichs-President by regular election. That Hitler only became President in August 1934 — this is perhaps the sole remaining result of the election of 1925, which placed the General Field-Marshal at the head of the Republic.

He took the oath to its Constitution without hesitation. . . .

¹ When the Nazis made their first big advance, from some 1,000,000 to over 6,000,000 votes.

PART THREE

HOW HITLER CAME TO POWER

CHAPTER I

1932 — HEINRICH BRUENING

FOR years Germany has been shivering with the fever of Revolution. The September elections of 1930 have for the first time shown the level of the thermometer: more than 100 National Socialists seats, nearly six and a half million votes for a party which had been vegetating in the Reichstag in insufficient strength to claim the status of a parliamentary party. The Republican parties take counsel together; after the election they attempt a diagnosis. 'A crisis election', says the Left. The unemployed, the formerly apathetic, the politically untrained voters must have supplied the bulk of the Nazi gains. For the Parties of the Left have lost nothing, the Social Democrats with 130 seats are still the largest parliamentary group, and even the Communists have made good their losses! 'Our seed is shooting,' murmur the German Nationalists and the People's Party, the groups of the bourgeois Right, and they believe the days of the Weimar Republic to be numbered. If Hitler keeps on at this rate the day must come when the Socialists, the trades unions and the freethinkers, from fear of a Fascist Revolution, will throw themselves into a counter-revolution led by the Prussians, the Junkers and the heavy industrialists. The real reasons for the Nazi electoral successes are overlooked by all in the camp of the old parties. None will grant that this is a Revolution. None will revise his preconceived opinions nor derive lessons from history. They just will not see, any of them,

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that three-fourths of the younger generation, of the new electoral groups, stand behind Hitler, that it is not the politically indifferent, but those who thirst for action who vote for Hitler, that they themselves are defending a lost position.

At the head of the Reich Government stands Dr. Heinrich Bruening, on the whole the finest and best that middle-class Germany can produce. Westphalian by origin, of good Lower Saxon peasant stock, from the middle class; here is no Alpine mongrel of inferior racial quality, like the leader of the National Socialist Party, no outcast, like that man, no border-German from the Viennese Destitutes' Home. Here is a man humanistically trained, with a university degree, a man who has travelled the world, who knows England and speaks English, a man with practical experience, come from the *élite* of the Catholic trades union movement. And on top of that a front-line officer, captain in the reserve, no corporal. A man in the prime of life, well built, with a clever face, the head of a professor with sharp and steady eyes behind his spectacles, a fine and lofty brow, a small mouth. The effect is somewhat ascetic, but no more so than is consistent with Bruening's combination of professor and officer. In knowledge, capability, energy and human greatness he is probably the best Chancellor the Reich has had since Bismarck — and yet he is a failure, a pacemaker against his will, a Jonah. In normal times, as Chancellor of a constitutional monarchy, as Chancellor even of Wilhelm II, he would have been a blessing. But now he is fatal.

Probably alone among the host of lobby-politicians and party-secretaries, Bruening had a premonition of what was coming as long back as the spring of 1930. He had a mental

picture of something new when Hermann Müller went and Hindenburg called in the then little known Bruening. He wished to govern not with the Reichstag alone, but as the President's Chancellor. He saw that the times called for an authoritative regime. And he saw that the old parties were in disintegration, that everything was beginning to slip and slide, that Germany's political mould was being shaped anew. He saw the twilight of the Left, he saw that a conservative wave was going through the western world, and he saw that religion was more important than ideology. He therefore wished to rally the conservative forces, to unite the Right Centre, he favoured the 'people's conservative' experiment of Herr Treviranus and wished to bring together the Catholic and Evangelical champions of the conservative tradition. But even he did not suspect that beneath the thin upper layer of civil order, civilization and tradition on which in the year 1930 the Reich and the society of the Germans was built, subterranean forces were fermenting and effervescing, that below that surface was no placid underground sea, but raging tumult.

It was the turn of the year 1931-32. In the autumn National Socialists, German Nationalists, Stahlhelm, the Storm Troops, the Land League and a few smaller bodies, under the leadership of Hugenberg, Hitler and Schacht, have formed in Harzburg a common front, in the ranks of which from the first day on there is nothing but strife and recrimination. They want jointly to overthrow Bruening and to prompt the General Field-Marshal to form 'a national government'. But in the Reichstag Bruening prevails with a slender majority and his cabinet, reduced to a few heads—the Chancellorship and Foreign Ministry are united in his hand, the Ministries of War and the

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Interior in that of General Groener — seems stronger than ever. Bruening has governed for one and three-quarter years. He governs with emergency decrees and a majority in the Reichstag which obeys him, gritting its teeth and sighing, because it has no alternative. Bruening reduces the standard of living of the masses; he cuts wages, salaries and prices. He increases taxation, knocks holes in social policy, undermines the 'Welfare State' which is the ideal of the trades unions and of the pinkish-red Social Democrats. But the Social Democrats have to be thankful that Bruening allows them to live at all, for they have no ideas of their own left and exist on waiting; fear of Hitler is the only motive of their actions, and a purely negative criticism, derived from the most ancient liberal sources, is their only weapon. As the Reichstag, according to the Constitution, may continue until 1934, they feel themselves safe for the time being. But 1932 nevertheless contains dangerous moments. Chief among them is the Presidential election. The 'most democratic constitution of the world', borrowed from American and French models without regard for the special characteristics of the country, its people and its history, provides for innumerable elections. In 1932 Hindenburg's term of office is due to lapse.

Bruening wants to avoid a new election. He tries to obtain a Reichstag majority for a Bill, amending the Constitution, to prolong Hindenburg's term of office. This gives the Harzburg Front its chance. Without these gentlemen Bruening cannot obtain the two-thirds majority necessary for a Bill to amend the constitution. Hitler, in a letter to Bruening, assents, on condition that Bruening should resign and himself be made Chancellor after the passage of the Bill. The transaction seems to be complete.

But Hitler's advisers upset his decision. He must demand the Chancellorship now, at once, they urge. Bruening rejects this. Hindenburg, too, will not be dictated to by the 'Bohemian corporal'. He must be elected. After weeks of indecision on Hitler's part, the Harzburg Front puts him forward as its candidate against Hindenburg (though jointly only in the second canvass!) The Field-Marshal finds himself opposed by the corporal. He, the Austrian and 'foreigner', had been made German citizen, by way of a nominal appointment to the Brunswick State service, just in the nick of time, after an attempt to citizenize him as a gendarme in Hildburghausen had collapsed among tumults of merriment.

A remarkable election campaign now follows. Behind Hindenburg stand first and foremost those masses of voters which in 1925 were his embittered enemies and called him 'mass murderer'. Against him are ranked most of his supporters of 1925. But the General Field-Marshal—which incidentally by this time means his warders and nurses, his son Oskar, his Secretary of State, Meissner, and the friends of his house—does not wish to identify himself with his new friends. Ever and again does the announcer on the night of the count tell the German people through the microphone that the votes given for Hindenburg must not be regarded as those of any particular political parties, for Hindenburg is not a party candidate. Socialists and Catholics have to help the Prussian General into the Presidential chair, but he is bashful, he insists on the pretence that those people have elected him who actually voted for the corporal from Brunswick. Hitler and Hugenberg, for their part, reply that they are not against Hindenburg, but against his electors and the men behind him.

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In the first vote Hindenburg with 18,000,000 votes prevails over Hitler, who only obtains 11,000,000. But as two other candidates appeared on the hustings, the Communist Thälmann, who obtains nearly 5,000,000 votes, and the Stahlhelmer Dösterberg (whom Hugenberg himself thrust forward in order to make his ally Hitler feel his dependence upon reaction!) a second vote has to be held, according to the wise provisions of the Weimar Constitution. Hitler announces his candidature for the second vote that same night. This time Hindenburg receives 53 per cent of the votes, Hitler, with 13,000,000, is beaten. In Coburg, the Bavarian town under National Socialist administration, where he sits with his lieutenants, Hitler breaks into tears. As always in difficult times, his nerves fail him. For the moment he sees no hope of victory.

The real victor seems to be Brüning. He had waged the electoral campaign, had raced round Germany by aeroplane, had fought oratorical battles with the maniacal word-dealer from Braunau — a gentleman against a man possessed. The Old Gentleman sat in the shadows, and very early in this year he went to Neudeck, to that Prussian estate which the Junkers had bought for him with money put up by the heavy industrialists, evading the revenue fees by a trick. Brüning governs. Brüning seems more powerful than ever. He has the Storm Troops suppressed by the Minister for War and the Interior, Brüning. He thunders at the Nazis when Brüning falters and fails in a Reichstag speech. On May 12th, after the Harzburg Front, and especially the Nazis, have scored further great successes in a number of State elections, he declares that he is but 100 yards from his goal.

Shall he support the Prussian Government of Braun,

Severing, Klepper and Hirtsiefer¹ against the majority in the Prussian Diet, which is ineligible to govern? Shall he defy the Nazis and make 'a move to the Left'?

What Bruening wanted, or whether he wanted anything, are things that have been long and often debated. Even now, in 1932, the Social Democrats have no idea of their next step. They go on muddling on, and hope that the crisis will abate, that capitalism — at the deathbed of which, according to their theorist Tarnow, they stand 'as doctors' — will recover its health, so that everything may yet come right. Bruening was a danger for Germany, but he was no dunderhead. He did not console himself with the sooth-sayings of Comrade Tarnow and the wise words of the Marxist Hilferding. He knew that a new Germany must arise from the sickbed of the revolutionary years, that the Weimar Republic was finished.

Today the picture that Bruening had in mind is known. First of all, he wanted to be rid of reparations. At Lausanne he would achieve this (that is why he described himself as being '100 yards from his goal'). He then meant to reclaim for Germany her sovereignty in arms, in principle, and to establish her right to an army of from 250,000 to 300,000 men, her neighbours to disarm to that level. And lastly, he designed to 'tame' the Nazis to a point where they would become eligible as partners in the Government — in the framework of a coalition stretching from his own Centre to Hugenberg and Hitler. But in order to safeguard the conservative idea of the State and the constitutional guarantees against Hitler's ambition, he wished, by means of a decree of Hindenburg's which the majority of the Reichstag was to endorse, to reintroduce the monarchy, a constitu-

¹ A Centre-Socialist coalition.

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tional monarchy on the English model. Hindenburg did not want this. If there was to be a monarchy, then it must be the Prussian monarchy, without parliamentary rights. But this is not the difference of opinion which led to Bruening's downfall.

VON PAPEN, AMATEUR JOCKEY

GREAT things are brewing in Neudeck. The Junkers do not like Bruening's new course. The 'Papist' has now begun to talk about land settlement. He wants to nationalize landed property for the settlement of unemployed. This is naked Bolshevism, they whisper in the Old Gentleman's ear. In Prussia he means to leave the 'Red Tsar', Otto Braun, in office. He is supporting Groener, about whom now, to cap all, family gossip is coursing through the army; the young wife of this general on the retired list has given birth soon after the wedding. Grinning, Oskar, his son, and the friends of the Old Gentleman tell him that the baby is to be called Nurmi, because of its speed . . . The Old Gentleman does not like to hear this kind of thing about generals.

Hitler now thrusts that man forward who has the best relationships with the army. This is Captain Röhm, the organizer of the Storm Troops, who now form a Brown Army 60,000 strong. The Storm Troops, these drumming, fifing, muttering and brawling churls, impress the 'modern' generals of the Reichswehr but little — but Röhm's feat of organization impresses them a great deal. Röhm negotiates with Schleicher. General Curt von Schleicher, a writing-desk-general, a maker of ministers, a feller of ministers, an ambitious man who loves politics, thinks the time has come for Groener to go. He thinks Bruening, too, to be superfluous; the moment is approaching, he thinks, when he himself can emerge from the background and take the centre of the stage.

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There are other players, beside Röhm, beside Schleicher, beside Meissner, beside Oskar and Oldenburg-Januschau. The 'Herrenklub', the gentlemen's club, now appears on the scene. It supplies Bruening's successor. After all this middle-class stuff in Germany, and especially in Prussia, a real 'gentleman' shall govern once again. Hindenburg has confidence in their candidate—Franz von Papen, erstwhile captain of hussars, one-time military attaché with the maddest stupidities on his record, amateur steeple-chaser, married to a rich wife, through her a kinsman-in-law of heavy industry, owner of the Centre newspaper *Germania*, a Catholic and Prussian, a man of faultless manners, who always manages to appear astute, knowing and yet amusing.

On May 29th Bruening sees Hindenburg. The Old Gentleman reads a few laconic questions and sentences from pieces of paper which Meissner has prepared for him. The final instruction is that Bruening should put no more emergency decrees before him for signature. Before that Bruening had been told that he had 'Bolshevists' in his Cabinet—to wit, the Minister for Agriculture, Schlange-Schöningen; who is for settlement schemes. Bruening goes—a dismissed servant. On May 30th he resigns. Franz von Papen becomes Chancellor. Bruening refuses the Foreign Ministry. He too, he says, has his honour.

On July 20th Papen unseats the Prussian Government. The middle-party ministers had in part counselled resistance. The Social Democrat Severing capitulated before a lieutenant and two men. The last possible weapon of democracy, the 80,000 Prussian policemen, now stand under Papen's command. On July 31st the Reichstag is elected. Hitler obtains 230 seats, about 37 per cent of the votes, 13,700,000. Papen remains in office. Hitler, after

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all, had promised the Reichs-President that he would 'tolerate' the Presidial Cabinet. 13,000,000 electors, 800,000 Storm Troops and Black Guards, 230 deputies — all this as an accessory for the reinvigoration of Prussia, for the cabinet of the Amateur Jockey! This is the illusion which Papen, Hugenberg and Oskar Hindenburg permitted themselves!

The Lausanne Conference freed Germany from reparations. The Disarmament Conference, which had been sitting in Geneva since the spring of 1932, certainly made no progress, but was at least clear that Germany would have to be accorded her military equality of rights in principle. The cabinet of von Papen reaped what Bruening had sown. In foreign politics, the omens were good. But in domestic politics surprises and disappointments were soon to come.

CHAPTER III

'CLEAR THE STREET!'¹

AMONG the many promises which Hitler made to the German people and to his followers was, for long enough, that about the 'night of long knives'. The Storm Troops sang it in every alleyway. '*Die Strasse frei den braunen Bataillonen . . .*' 'Clear the street for the brown battalions . . .' Now the Nazis had 230 seats in the Reichstag, but prison was still the penalty for every active foe. This, from the standpoint of the Storm Troops, was nothing short of a scandal! They clamoured ever more loudly for 'Freedom'. This meant freedom to murder. In the night following the election the Storm Troops, in consequence of a misunderstood order, broke loose in several places. At Königsberg in Prussia they held a little St. Bartholomew's Night on their own. A little later there were bloody deeds in Silesia. The worst of them was the appalling murder of the worker Pietrzuch at Potempa; he was set upon in his bed at night by five Storm Troopers and trampled and stabbed to death before the eyes of his mother. There awoke for the last time in the minds of the Junkers and other gentry who now ruled Germany those old 'inhibitions', the transmitted ideas of a State of law and order. Schleicher had word sent to the Nazis that he would give the order to shoot. Papen introduced martial law and put the death penalty on political murder. The mood of the country, as in the autumn of 1923, was strained to snapping-point. Would Hitler venture

¹ *Die Strasse frei!* The first line of the Storm Troopers' song.

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another Putsch? Would the army and the Conservatives together muster up enough courage to shoot on the Storm Troops? This time 13,000,000 voters stood behind Hitler.

Hitler seemed to be ready for anything. He assembled Storm Troops in Berlin. The acts of violence increased, and he demanded officially from Papen, as a condition for his support of the Cabinet, three days ‘freedom’ for the Storm Troops. Papen sent him to the Old Gentleman.

On August 13th, at five o’clock in the afternoon, Hitler, Frick and Röhm appeared at the President’s palace in the Wilhelmstrasse. It was a mistake to take Captain Röhm along. He is useful in negotiations with Schleicher, but impossible in the presence of the Prussian General Field-Marshal. The giant in the frock coat supports himself, slightly bowed, on a crutched stick. In his left hand he holds, as at the time of Bruening’s dismissal, sheets of paper on which others have written in large letters what he is to say to Hitler. Anxious, embarrassed, unsure, the unsuccessful Viennese art scholar stands before the Field-Marshal, the demagogue before the Junker, the loquacious dilettante before the word-sparing man who his life long has interested himself only in the army and shooting.

Hindenburg’s speech is a parade-ground dressing-down. He asks Hitler if that man actually desires untrammelled power. He, Hindenburg, is only able to offer the Ministry of Posts and the Vice-Chancellorship. As Hitler seeks to talk round the point, the Old Gentleman cuts him short and accuses him bluntly of breaking his word, for he formerly promised to ‘tolerate’ the Presidial Cabinet. The entire audience lasts less than ten minutes. The corporal was not asked to sit down in the Field-Marshal’s house — other than in the Post Minister’s seat which he refused. As

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the three Nazis retire the Old Gentleman growls and rumbles a last admonition after them: acts of violence such as have recently occurred, this sort of thing must not happen again. In doing so he raises his crutched stick as if he meant to strike. It seems as if one of the old Hohenzollerns had stepped out of his picture into the room — for instance, Friedrich Wilhelm I, who was wont personally to chastise unruly subjects. It is the last great scene in Prussian history, a last effort before the capitulation, a drama with simple motives, with coarse and homely words, clear characters. The corporal from Braunau is beaten.

Does he admit defeat? His elasticity seems at an end. He does mad things. In a public speech he declares that he is still young, but Hindenburg is eighty-five. He, Herr Hitler from Braunau, can wait, he feels himself fit, and can wait long enough. His own friends and pacemakers on the Right are appalled by this tactless crudity.

The murderers of Potempa, who tortured the worker Pietrzuch to death, are condemned to death under Papen's emergency decree. Hitler telegraphs to them that he feels himself 'at one with them in boundless loyalty', he addresses these murderers as 'my comrades', he calls the verdict 'a monstrous act of blood-justice'. Papen replies that he is 'against Hitler and for the State of law and order'. Hitler rejoins that law is that which he defines as law. That is to become exactly the foundation of the new Hitlerist Reich.

In this summer the Socialists pull themselves together and are more active. Gradually they copy the propagandist methods of their foe, his parades, his drums and fifes, his songs, his flags and banners, his speaking choirs and the liturgical forms with which he adorns his meetings; but

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all this is not so important. A few young Socialists, first among them Carl Mierendorff (who today is still, after many years, expiating his activities in a Hitler concentration camp) succeeded in overcoming the tenacious resistance of the old party-bureaucracy against these new methods. But economic programmes are now also produced and laid before the masses — two years too late and still 80 per cent too complicated. Everything that might still avail in such a moment, the fruitful ideas which Schacht is later to exploit, are discarded by the executive of the Party and by the trade unions as 'inflationist'. The Socialists no longer venture to tear themselves away from bourgeois monetary theories. But the increased activity on the Left is probably explained by the change in the political regime. Confronted by a purely 'Presidial' Cabinet of Junkers and Monarchists, the Socialists feel themselves back in their revolutionary, or at least oppositionist, heyday. The good old times, when they forged 'demands' and plans, when they indicted the State and 'the possessing classes' while bearing no responsibility themselves, when they demanded that 'the ruling classes' should concern themselves with law, order and bread, these good old times seem to be returning. They were become modest when they themselves governed; they were small and cowardly when Bruening came; but now they feel themselves big and important in face of the gentleman jockey and the political generals who — presumably in contrast to Messrs. Leipart and Tarnow, Hertz and Hilferding — understand nothing of 'economics'.

Hitler continues to deliberate, how he can come to power. He knows very well that he is lost if he enters a cabinet as second man, that he will then be denaturized, tamed, and politically emasculated. But how shall he become

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the first man? He negotiates with Bruening. Perhaps the two men who have been shown the door by the General Field-Marshal — the Captain and the Corporal — could together subdue the Marshal? Hitler proposes the deposition of Hindenburg. Bruening, who does not take the whole business very seriously, makes the proposal known. Another black mark is entered in Hitler's book.

The remarkable mood of the summer, which hovers between civil war and a reversion to the easygoing pre-war politics, the period of authoritative government without authority and of universal rebellion without revolutionaries leads to the grotesque scene of September 12th, 1932.

The new Reichstag was opened by the woman Communist, Clara Zetkin. She read a long declaration, composed in Moscow, in which she proclaimed the coming of Soviet Germany. How real this Communist vision was, was shown when, immediately afterwards, Hermann Göring, was elected Reichstag President! The Centre voted for him. Göring protested against the authoritative leanings of the Government and declared that the Reichstag had a majority capable of forming a government. It looked as if the black-brown Coalition, Centre and Nazis, was already formed. The Harzburg Front, on the contrary, was split, for the German Nationalists were the only ones who still stood behind Papen.

On September 12th the Communists tabled a motion for the immediate retraction of the emergency decrees. The vote was to be taken without debate. At this juncture, either a parliamentary group or the government would have needed to oppose the motion, if a vote were to be hindered. The Nazis proposed an adjournment, the Centre wished to preserve parliamentary tradition and hold a debate. Hitler

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was called on the telephone. Here was his chance for revenge on Papen. He decided that the Communist motion should be allowed to pass. Herr von Papen sat on the Government bench, seemingly in ignorance of what was afoot. Göring began with the vote. Now Papen jumped up and waved the celebrated ‘red wallet’ at the Reichstag President, from which he took a piece of paper. Everybody knew that it was the dissolution order for the Reichstag. But Göring was no Social Democrat and no Centrist, but just Hermann Göring. He was not to be deterred. He had his Führer’s order to defend parliamentary procedure, and he did this as if it were his most sacred conviction, as if he, and not Otto Wels, held the hereditary right to defend democracy. As the Order was put before him, he declared that the vote was now in progress and Herr von Papen was too late with it. Papen pushed the Order towards Hermann, and Hermann pushed it back. When Papen’s defeat — by 512 votes against 42 — was clear to see, Hermann read the Order to the House and declared it to be invalid, since the Government had been overthrown before the reading of the decree of dissolution. With the mien of a democrat born and bred, he declared:

I am firmly resolved to maintain both the standing of the Reichstag and above all the right of the people’s assembly to continue its work in accordance with the Constitution.

This was probably the most laughable situation in the whole gloomy story of German parliamentarism. But most of the participants did not see the joke. They believed in Göring’s conversion. The Left began to admire him. What, a democrat after all? You see, the support of the

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masses simply forces the leaders to hold to the people! Already they perceived in Göring a brother of their guild, a worshipper of the order of the day, who would yet perhaps give a backbone to Parliament.

CHAPTER IV

NEW FRONTS

THE Reichstag, however, in the end counts as having been dissolved. New elections are set for November 6th. Papen prepares for a long term of office. He plans a constitutional reform, he makes further inroads in the German social policy. Nothing much can happen to him at the elections, for the 42 votes of September 12th will certainly not grow into a majority, but if they decrease still further that is of little importance to him as long as Hindenburg props him up. In general he probably hopes that the elections will weaken Hitler and, by constant repetition, tame him. (This might have happened, if Schleicher had not overthrown his friend Papen, and the latter Schleicher.)

The old German party system now breaks down finally. New groups, new coalitions, begin to show. Gregor Strasser makes his famous speech in the Reichstag about the 95 per cent of the German people who are filled with an anti-capitalist yearning, and the Socialists prick up their ears. The trade unions reflect: perhaps there is still a way? A brown-pink coalition? Leipart takes his cue from Strasser's speech and delivers speeches with a strong nationalist undertone. There is a strike of the Berlin transport workers, and suddenly the Nazis and Communists are side by side, both against the employers, both against the government, both against the Socialists. The immediate gainers in the November elections were the Communists, but in the long run undoubtedly the Nazis.

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Inside the National Socialist Party the camps divide more and more plainly. Gregor Strasser clearly wants to take the line towards real Socialism, that of collaboration with Leipart, to whom, in a great public meeting, he pays a compliment that cannot be ignored. But Goebbels prefers to brawl and wrangle with the Communists, in order further to undermine the State and make it ripe for overthrow. The conservative forces group themselves more clearly about Papen. The election takes place on November 6th. For the first time since 1928 Hitler suffers a severe setback. Communists and German Nationalists are the victors of the day.

On November 6th, 1932, the tidal wave of National Socialism seems to have been broken. The parties of the Left are jubilant. The spell is broken, the magic of the eternally rising election results no longer binds. Between July and November Hitler has lost more than 2,000,000 votes — from 13,732,779 to 11,705,256. His present total is little higher than that which he reached at the first vote for the Presidential election in March. A year of work has been in vain. Two million Germans who had already been won over, who had ventured the great leap out of the middle-class camp into that of the 'German Revolution', the Fascist denial of all transmitted values, have again turned their backs on Hitler! Whither have they wandered? Some tens of thousands have gone back to the German Nationalists; they already think Papen stronger than Hitler. Others have gone over to the Communists: these are the rebels, who see in the Communists a more robust destructive force than in the Nazis. A million and a half of the electors of July have not voted at all this time. They stand on one side, embittered or

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hesitant. This is the reserve army which may yet be mobilized; Goebbels reposes his hopes in them. But the question is whether the National Socialist Party can still fight another election.

CHAPTER V

CRISES OF FINANCE AND CONFIDENCE

As long as Hitler was on the upward grade he had credit. The banks advanced funds, the printing works did not press their claims, the textile firms and arms-dealers granted the 'Ordnance Stores' of the Storm Troopers and Black Guards unlimited credit. The day of the Party's advent to power, they thought, could not be distant. If it won the race, the money would be repaid with interest, and a claim on the gratitude of these gentlemen would have been staked. The 6th November caused a panic in the camp of these creditors of Hitler. A party which loses 34 seats in a few months and in November seems to be farther from power than it was in March is a very doubtful debtor. If Papen means to carry on the fight against Marxism in the name of the State itself, heavy industry will hardly subscribe further funds towards this costly Hitlerist party. Perhaps the Moor has served his turn? Perhaps the mission of Hitlerism, which is to put the Junkers and industrialists in the saddle, has already been accomplished, and Hitler has now only a kick in the pants to expect from those high quarters?

The Party has 12 million marks' worth of debts. The diary of Doktor Goebbels (which was published, and perhaps written later, but is nevertheless illuminating in this respect) speaks almost exclusively of financial worries about this time:

November 11th: I receive a report about the financial position of the Berlin organization. It is most dis-

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quieting. Only debts and obligations, and no possibility, after this defeat, of raising money anywhere.

December 8th: Our money troubles make all useful work impossible.

Matters had come to such a pass that the printing works refused to print leaflets, while the Storm Troops were compelled to exist on the proceeds of 'street collections', in other words, from begging. Side by side with the financial crisis in the Party came a grave 'confidence crisis', about which Goebbels repeatedly complains in his diary. The party's losses in Thuringia amounted, in five months, to 40 per cent of their votes. The party offices were slackening in their work and belief in Hitler's victory was waning. If a really effective counter-force had existed the Nazis could now have been overwhelmed. But the inner secret of the events which happened round the turn of the year 1932-33 was that this counter-force was absent, that Hitler was still 'the coming man', and that no crisis or reverse seriously damaged him. A revolutionary movement can turn everything to its own advantage as long as it is on the upward grade and has not accomplished its mission. Once it has passed that stage, everything turns against it. It has been observed, and not without truth, that the genius of Napoleon was never more clearly shown than in the campaign of 1814. And yet this campaign ended with the voyage to Elba, while the mad adventures of Egypt and Marengo led to the Consulate and the Empire. That arsenal of miracles, intrigues and chance is not yet empty from which a 'dynamic' movement like the National Socialist Party derives its strength.

CHANGING THE GUARD IN THE
WILHELMSTRASSE

ALTHOUGH Franz von Papen was able to record a modest success at the elections, although Hindenburg after November 6th again and most plainly refused to call on Hitler, although the Reichs-President specifically reaffirmed his faith in the system of the Presidial Cabinets and his confidence in von Papen, in spite of all these things Germany was surprised by a change of Chancellors on December 2nd, 1932, just before the meeting of the new Reichstag. Papen resigned and his place was taken by a man who counted as the most powerful in Germany and as the real 'Kingmaker' and Minister-unmaker, although his name had only been frequently heard and discussed after Bruening's fall. General Curt von Schleicher became Reichs-Chancellor. Franz von Papen, however, continued to dwell in the Chancellor's Palace — he was a friend of the general — and it transpired that at the same time, and on account of some building repairs which were being made in the President's Palace, the Hindenburg family also temporarily took up its abode in the Chancellor's Palace. The relations between the Hindenburgs and the Papens were cordial. They took tea together in the evening and conversed, as it were, across the corridors, and when Papen went the Old Gentleman gave him a portrait with the pointed inscription 'I had a comrade'¹.

¹ 'I had a comrade' (*ich hatt' einen Kameraden*) is the funeral march of one of the German cavalry regiments.

GUARD CHANGING IN WILHELMSTRASSE

Why did Papen go? Darkness still obscures the negotiations or intrigues which led to the 'changing of the guard' of December 2nd — a 'Napoleonic' date perhaps deliberately chosen by Schleicher. One can only conjecture about the causes of this change of Chancellors. Heiden assumes, and probably with good reason, that the Reichswehr, after the experience of the Berlin traffic strike, had declared itself unable in case of emergency to defend a Cabinet with so small a basis in the country, and one which might at any moment be assailed by a united front of Nazis and Communists. Since 1918 the Reichswehr had always feared isolation from the 'masses'. The thing it yearned for was the mass, nationalist movement which would be ready to follow the army. Herr von Papen had proved himself in perilous fashion to be the heir of Wilhelm II. He had been unable to win over the Nazis and had the Socialists and trade unions against him. But even his own Catholic Centre was angry with him because of the intrigue against Bruening; his own party regarded him as a half-renegade who flirted with the other side. If the Reichswehr was to uphold the authority of the State against the Storm Troops, the trade unions and the Communist Red Fighting Front, it needed to have its own views better represented, the dividing line between it and the Junkers and capitalists more clearly drawn. For this reason it overthrew Papen and put Schleicher in power, who in his initial declaration offered himself to the country as a 'social general', paid compliments to the Socialists, and who tried, over Hitler's head, to get in touch with that section of the National Socialist Party which he held to be really nationalist and revolutionary. He regarded his Cabinet, as it was first formed, as a transition stage. He had long been negotiating with the men whom he

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meant to enlist in his 'Grand Cabinet'. The Reichstag was only called together for a formal session and then adjourned until the end of January. Schleicher would have preferred to dissolve it completely, once again. As matters then were, another election might have cost Hitler sixty seats and have established equilibrium between the Nazis, the Socialists and the Communists. A majority could then have been formed from the Nazis, Socialists and Centre.

CHAPTER VII

GREGOR STRASSER'S PLAN

THE man with whom Schleicher meant to play his great game was Gregor Strasser. This Bavarian chemist was not only the real organizer of the Hitler Party, which he had kept above water between the unsuccessful Putsch of 1923 and Hitler's reappearance in 1926, but he was also beyond question the most honourable, original and steadfast man among the leaders of the National Socialist Party. He was a German Socialist and wanted to free the Party as soon as possible from its connections with capitalist circles, in order to win over the Red working-class masses for it. He had very much in common with Schleicher for that which both of them called 'Socialism' had been born in the trenches and derived from the field-grey ideology of 1914-18.¹

Gregor Strasser did not want a dictatorship based on terror or agitation, but an authoritative regime based on the confidence of the people. He was a resolute enemy of that liberal 'democracy' which to him seemed to be but a veiled plutocracy, he was the foe of the hidden forces of finance, of a kept press, of degenerate parliamentary procedure. But he was just as much against any Pretorian rule. He was linked with Hitler and the Party by a primitive feeling of loyalty, of fellowship and comradeship. For this reason he did not follow his younger brother Otto Strasser when this man in July 1930 burned his bridges to Hitler and founded

¹ The author in his use of the term 'field grey' means approximately what an English-writing author might mean by 'khaki' or 'front-line'.

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the 'Black Front'. For this same reason he desired now, in 1932, only to come forward if Hitler should be found ineligible and unacceptable — 'Herr Hitler', as Gregor Strasser, alone among the paladins of the 'Führer', still called the 'Chief', the 'Pg'.¹

Strasser thought the situation of the Party very precarious. As its national organizer, he knew better than any other the emptiness of the Party's cashbox. He knew that, for lack of funds alone, a new election campaign could not be fought, because none would print the electoral placards. He knew that the time was come to save what could still be saved. Perhaps he underestimated the strength of the movement at this juncture, but he saw very clearly the possibilities of profiting from its position.

At the end of November he negotiated with Schleicher. The general took this people's leader to Hindenburg. Gregor Strasser learned from Hindenburg's own lips (as Otto Strasser relates in his *German Bartholomew's Night*) that the Reichs-President 'would never make the Bohemian corporal German Chancellor'. Hindenburg gave his word of honour as a Prussian general about this.

Strasser reported to Hitler about his discussions with Hindenburg and Schleicher. He explained that the Chancellorship would never be given to Hitler but might be given to Strasser. The Vice-Chancellorship in a Schleicher Cabinet, he said, could certainly be had for him, Strasser.

As Strasser told Hitler that Hindenburg was obdurately opposed to Hitler's appointment, Hitler interrupted that he had different information from another quarter. Strasser told the Chancellor of this, and Schleicher was furious. The 'other quarter' could only be Papen. The Chancellor

¹ *Parteigenosse*, or party-comrade.

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thereon had his friend and predecessor watched by the police. The secret police photographed Papen as he left the well-known mansion in Cologne of an equally well-known banker; he had just met Hitler there. Schleicher summoned Franz von Papen and reproached him with these relations. Papen denied them. Schleicher demanded his word of honour as an officer, that he had not talked with Hitler. Papen gave the Prussian officer's word. Schleicher thereupon took the photograph out of his pocket. Schleicher then demanded Papen's expulsion, on account of this perjury, from the Count Schlieffen Association.¹ The case still awaits a hearing. The plaintiff was 'settled with' on June 30th, 1934.

Papen now had to risk everything. He put up a project of his own, a Papen-Hitler-Hugenberg coalition, against the Schleicher-Strasser-Leipart conception. Agreement was reached at the house of the banker Schroeder that Papen should become Chancellor, Hitler Vice-Chancellor, Göring Papen's delegate in the Premiership of Prussia, Hugenberg Minister for Economics, and Seldte Minister of Labour. Hitler gave his word that no changes should be made in the composition of this cabinet for four years. The German people was informed of this pledge from the balcony of the Reich Chancery on January 30th.

But Hitler was not finally won over by this proposal. He still seemed inclined to try Strasser's experiment. He made the following conditions: (1) the payment of all the Party's debts by the Reich; (2) no dissolution of the Reichstag without his consent; (3) the entry of Strasser, Frick, Stöhr and Hierl into the cabinet as 'private persons'. Schleicher and Strasser wished to put the agreement with Hitler in writing. Strasser spoke to Hitler on the telephone. This

¹ An organization of Prussian officers.

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was on December 7th. Hitler was to have been in Berlin the following morning.

On the morning of December 8th Gregor Strasser stood waiting on the platform of the Anhalter Station in Berlin. The night express from Munich arrived; Herr Hitler's sleeping compartment was empty. The conductor knew why Herr Hitler had left the train at Weimar.

Captain Göring and Dr. Goebbels saw that the Strasser-Schleicher-Leipart coalition would mean that they themselves would be left in the cold. Not only as men, but their special services would for all time remain unused. For if the German Revolution were to shape its course towards the mass-coalition of all those forces between Strasser and Leipart, there would be just as little for the demagogic agitator, the 'Propagandi', to do as for the terrorist Göring. They would both be superfluous.

They drove by car to meet Hitler, wakened him in the train and took him from his sleeping car. They told him that Strasser and Schleicher were 'conspiring' against him, that it was entirely untrue that Hindenburg would have none of the 'Chief'. Hitler could certainly become Vice-Chancellor. Strasser simply wanted power for himself. He wanted to have Hitler on a leading string, and if need be to destroy the Party. Hitler, who was already losing his nerve, believed this the more readily in that a high post was dangled before him.

Thus 'informed', Hitler ultimately reached Berlin. Immoderately excited, he abused Strasser and hurled the calumnies of Goebbels and Göring in his face as accusations. Strasser was seized by a feeling of disgust, which was comprehensible but politically dangerous. He asked Hitler how he could believe anything of the sort, if he really thought him

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(Strasser) capable of such villainy. Hitler answered yes. Strasser left without another word. He wrote, resigning his posts in the Party, but remained a member of it. He wished, he said, 'to continue to serve as a private soldier of the movement'. Then, with his family, he left for the South. It was the typically Bavarian reaction to a typically Prussian intrigue.

Feder and Frick had followed Strasser, but thought better of their action the next day. Hitler, in spite of the 'Strasser crisis', had the Party in hand, because Strasser refused to carry on active opposition against him. But Schleicher now had to manoeuvre; his most important partner had fallen out. The Reichstag was to meet at the end of January. It was not possible to find a majority. Only two possibilities remained: a dissolution, with Hindenburg's authority, or a seizure of power over Hindenburg's head. Schleicher thought he might attempt the second with the Reichswehr and the trade unions. Strasser could perhaps be carried away and the 'Grand Cabinet' still formed. The threads of German destiny were spun between the Bendlerstrasse, where the Reichswehr had its Ministry, and the Inselstrasse, where Leipart reigned like a king over five million organized trade unionists. In the Kaiserhof Hotel and in the Chancellor's Palace Hitler and Papen held their scissors ready to cut these threads.

On December 15th, 1932, General Schleicher delivered a radio speech which represented his real programme as Chancellor. He called himself in this oration 'a social general'. He attacked the dogmas of Capitalism and Socialism. But such concrete plans and measures as he announced were more calculated to please the trade unions than the employers'

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organizations. He laid stress on the non-party character of the Reichswehr and threatened professional agitators, as well as 'certain newspapers given to incitement', with an emergency decree which was lying ready in his drawer 'and in its thoroughness represents an excellent piece of work'. On this day Goebbels wrote in his diary:

It is high time that we should come to power, but for the present there is not the slightest prospect of this.

Only a week before this Hitler, according to the 'Doktor's' diary had even threatened to 'end things with the revolver' if the Party should go to pieces. Hitler is of those men who like to use such phrases, and for that matter always carry within them a certain inner readiness to commit suicide. The idolater of Friedrich the Great, however, has this much in common with his idol that he does not quickly carry out his threats, even when they are made on oath, as on November 9th, 1923.¹ Nevertheless, the Party undoubtedly labours under a grave crisis. Schleicher has the reins firmly in his hand, and Hitler's only card is called Papen. If this card should not avail, if the Reichstag should be dissolved, the extent of the Party's decline could not even be foreseen. The intrigue with Papen, it is true, was going on nicely, but to the present day it is not possible to define the stages by which it approached realization. Until the turn of the year 1932-33 it was more a phantom than a serious possibility.

¹ The day of Hitler's early and unsuccessful Putsch in Munich.

CHAPTER VIII

SCHROEDER—PAPEN—LIPPE

ON December 29th Goebbels entered a hopeful sign in his diary: the interview between Hitler and Papen was looming in sight. On January 4th he recorded that the interview had taken place and had become public through 'an indiscretion'. Goebbels does not mention that the interview was in the house of the banker Schroeder in Cologne and was devoted mainly to the problem of financing the Party. The banker had succeeded in raising credits to tide Hitler over, so that at least the due acceptances could be met. In addition, money had been found to finance the next election. Goebel's diary shows the effects of this financial development:

'In view of the gratifying political progress we are making we can hardly be bothered to think about the difficult financial position of the Party. If we are able to strike this time, it won't matter anyway.'

That was on January 6th. Schroeder's money was at work. Schleicher's 'socialist' speech of December 15th had moved heavy industry and the banks to put a last stake on Papen-Hitler.

Outwardly, Schleicher's position seemed up to the middle of January to be stronger. The extremists of Left and Right ventured no assault upon the Chancellor-General, while the trade unions were obviously inclined to fall into line behind him and to cast overboard, at long last, their old friendship with the Red Party-machine. Hindenburg still seemed to stand behind Schleicher.

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On January 15th there were Provincial Diet elections in Lippe. It is still difficult to say why Schleicher allowed them. Perhaps he hoped they would supply further proof of Hitler's decline. Perhaps he did not even bother about the election in this laughably petty State. At all events, he was wrong in his reckoning. Of the elections in Lippe, the smallest German Federal State, it may be said that the mouse in labour produced a mountain. A few tens of thousands of votes, from among the forty million voters of the German Reich, led to a great decision. Goebbels had concentrated his last ounce of propagandist energy and ingenuity upon this little piece of Westphalian earth. He brought his heaviest guns to bear upon this Lilliputian State and did not spare money. Every extra vote that could be squeezed out of Lippe, in comparison with the election of November 6th, cost the Party a deal of money, but on balance the expenditure was well worth while. Worth while, at least for Hitler and Goebbels. What Schroeder thinks about it to-day is another question.

The Nazi share of the votes cast in Lippe rose from 34.7 per cent to 39.6. Hitler did not reach his figures of July 1932, but Schleicher's reckoning, and the speculation of the Left upon a further decline of the National Socialist Party now had a hole in it. Lippe gives Franz von Papen a new opportunity to intervene. Now he is able to put a clear argument before the Old Gentleman. It was different after six months of Papen-government! In that time Hitler had lost two million votes, for Germany had had a clear Prussian regime, the old order had been restored, the Communists had been sharply rapped over the knuckles. But now, after only a month of Schleicher's government, all that has been lost! His 'social' ideas, his coquetting with

the 'Bolshevism' of Leipart and Strasser, his detestable attacks on the possessing-classes, his lip-service to the proletarians — all this has only whipped up the Brown torrent once more! Now we see the fruits — the Reichswehr just isn't capable of governing alone.

After January 15th the chances of a Papen-Hitler Chancellorship rise rapidly. But Schleicher does not perceive this.

Gregor Strasser is back in Germany. Relations with Leipart are improving from day to day. Schleicher feels confident. At some social gathering he declares most decidedly, and with his well-known tendency towards irony: 'The house-painter won't make it.' The author of this book supped one night at that time — probably between January 25th and 28th, 1933 — with Madame Geneviève Tabouis, Unter den Linden. Madame Tabouis came from Schleicher. With a gesture of his closed fist he had said to her: 'I've got Herr Hitler like that!' Madame Tabouis may recall the supper partner who then said to her: 'If Herr Schleicher has got Herr Hitler like that, he had better crush him quickly, or it will be too late!'

The 'house-painter' in fact was well on the way to 'make it'. And Schleicher, despite his astuteness, suppleness and energy, was on the wrong tack. Like all Reichswehr officers who were under the influence of their experience in the November revolt of 1918, he overestimated the strength of the Left and did not quite realize that the wave of Revolution was rising on the Right. The Left similarly misjudged the situation at that time. They still saw in Schleicher 'Reaction'; in the salvation of the Reichstag and the maintenance of parliamentary procedure with its rites, their goal; and in the National Socialist Party only

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mercenary auxiliaries of 'Reaction' who had been helped by the crisis. Laughably enough, they still regarded themselves as the hereditary lessees of the 'Revolution' and of the much-vaunted 'Progress'. Friedrich Stampfer, then one of the intellectual leaders of Social Democracy, relates in his *Memoirs* — seemingly without any notion of the picture of self-derision which he thus offers — that Schleicher asked the Socialist Parliamentary leader Breitscheid whether the Socialists 'would go to the barricades' if the Reichstag were dissolved and not re-elected by the date constitutionally prescribed. 'To this', says Stampfer, 'Breitscheid answered that such a challenge would certainly produce the gravest storms.' Schleicher seemingly took this answer seriously, although every reasonable man must at that time have known that at the maximum there would not be more than a storm in a teacup. In practice the Socialists never ventured near the barricades, neither at Hitler's appointment nor at the Reichstag fire nor at the challenge of the blatant breach with the Constitution and the dissolution of the trade unions. They might have proved themselves a shade more warlike against Papen or Schleicher than against Hitler who for them was a kind of 'Republican' or 'Democrat'; but in spite of Breitscheid's weather forecast the Chancellor might without any trepidation have ventured the stroke.

CHAPTER IX

FALLEN OVER THE SAME THRESHOLD

WHEN Schleicher, in May 1932, wished to overthrow Dr. Bruening, he caused him to stumble over the threshold of Neudeck. Bruening's very tame attempts at a land reform and his plan for the settlement of unemployed on the fallow acres of great landed proprietors — who incidentally were to receive compensation — had been characterized as 'Bolshevism' by Hindenburg's friends, chief among them the old Januschauer. Hindenburg thereupon threw his Chancellor out. Now Schleicher, who after all must have known the facts, made the same mistake. The Hindenburgs were hand-in-glove with the Junkers. The Junkers, first going to the heavy industrialists and bankers for the purchase money, had bound the Reichs-President more closely to themselves by the gift of Neudeck. The gift was not the cleanest of transactions. The estate had been conveyed forthwith to Oskar, the President's son, in order to evade death duties. No conveyance fees had been paid. Large sums had been released from the State aid-for-farmers fund (the *Osthilfe*, or *Help-for-the East*) for this estate, as for most other great landed properties in Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia. To lay a finger on the *Osthilfe* and the Junkers, therefore, meant to indict Hindenburg himself! But if Schleicher wanted to do that his only way would have been a Revolution, and to that end he would have needed in advance to make sure of Strasser, Leipart and the Reichswehr, to

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arrest Papen, Hitler, Oskar Hindenburg, a few dozen captains of industry, Nazi SS leaders, Junkers and opportunists, to abduct the Old Gentleman himself and put him in some castle under guard of trustworthy troops, and to dissolve the Reichstag. On the day after this coup, he could without further misgivings have confiscated their superfluous land from the Junkers.

The proverb says, 'A small blow stings a man, a great one knocks him down'. Schleicher delivered the small blow. He put at the disposal of the Left Parties documentary material about the corrupt practices in the disbursement of the Osthilfe fund. The scandal was revealed in a Reichstag Committee which met in the middle of January. For years fantastic sums had been flung into a bottomless pit. The Januschauer alone had had 620,000 marks (some £30,000!) from a fund voted by the Reichstag for the relief of 'distressed agriculture' in the Eastern Provinces. Hardly a Junker family but was convicted of naked and shameless robbery from public funds. But the Junkers, and their organization, the 'Reich Land League', reacted to these exposures in a different fashion than Schleicher had perhaps anticipated. They did not capitulate, but immediately declared open and violent war upon him. Now it became clear that Schleicher had the great landlords, the heavy industrialists, the banks, Hitler, Göring and Goebbels, Papen and Oskar Hindenburg against him. His resignation was openly demanded.

Apart from his psychological blunder, Schleicher committed a decisive tactical mistake. Before venturing anything at all, he should have obtained from Hindenburg the famous 'Red wallet' with a blank cheque for the dissolution of the Reichstag. But first he made enemies of all

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Hindenburg's friends, and then he went and demanded authority to dissolve Parliament! Hindenburg refused it to the 'social General', who after the attack on the Junkers could only appear to him to be a 'Bolshevist General'. On January 21st Goebbels in his diary described the preparations for Schleicher's overthrow as being in full progress. On the 24th he spoke of it as an accomplished fact. Schleicher needed either the dissolution or a majority before January 31st, when the Reichstag was due to meet.

The December plan emerged again for a last time, along with various other plans favoured by the Reichswehr generals. Schleicher and Strasser had missed their hour, but could the lost opportunity yet be recaptured? Schleicher renewed his negotiations with Leipart. The revolutionary solution, General Strike and Dictatorship of the Reichswehr, was considered. But Leipart hesitated, probably from an inherent fear of deeds and risks than from any particular respect for legal methods. He reduced the balance of a whole epoch, the last chapter of the history of the German Marxist movement, and the sum of a century to the miraculously concise formula: 'What will Herr Bumke say about it?' Bumke was President of the Constitutional Court, before which the Socialists had for years and years been indicting history, occasionally with the success that their view was confirmed to be the 'legal' one. And what will Herr Bumke say now, if the most legal and most loyal of the legal and loyal, the 'international, nation-liberating, revolutionary Social Democrats' take part in a *coup d'état*?

The last hope of a sane policy for Germany, as opposed to a Pretorian dictatorship and the totalitarian State, broke down on this awful vision of Herr Leipart, who saw the picture of an angry and avenging Bumke rise before his eyes.

CHAPTER X

DEUS EX MACHINA

W. von Alvensleben

At last, on January 28th, Schleicher knows that his game is lost. Papen is coming back. He brings Hitler as Vice-Chancellor. The Old Gentleman is ready to give the 'Bohemian Corporal' the second place in the Reich.

On the 29th Papen, Hugenberg, Seldte, and Dusterberg begin to negotiate with Hitler and his men. The idea is still that Papen shall become Chancellor. This is not Papen's own wish, but the condition made by Hugenberg and Seldte's Stahlhelmers, and it is also Hindenburg's condition. Papen himself seems to be in the other camp. At this juncture he certainly desires Hitler's chancellorship, which alone can keep the Reichswehr and Schleicher down. The broken word of honour and Schleicher's mortal enmity are hot embers on which Papen sits.

The Nazis demand the Chancellorship for Hitler; Goebbels in his diary has already booked this as a certainty on January 24th. Hugenberg and Dusterberg are against it. The Old Gentleman hesitates. And then, on the morning of January 30th, suddenly, uninvited and most opportunely, there appears a *deus ex machina*, Herr Werner von Alvensleben, one of those charming and conscienceless idlers and flaneurs, adventurers and opportunists with whom Papen has long surrounded himself. Alvensleben senior is the founder of the Herrenklub and the parent of Papen's first Chancellorship. If young Alvensleben now opportunely

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arrives with tidings, these emanate in all probability from Papen himself. The young man reports that Schleicher has alarmed the Potsdam garrison and means to march on Berlin. Panic spreads. These gentlemen see visions of themselves before the firing-squads. Only Hitler stands steady. It is his hour. Now he is the Saviour! The others accept him. As the noonday bells chime he stands before the General Field-Marshal, a 'Bohemian corporal' and Chancellor of the German Reich.

On the evening of January 30th, 1933, 25,000 Storm Troops with blazing torches march through Berlin. In the Wilhelmstrasse they march past the two neighbouring houses in which — still according to that law of dualism which the Weimar Constitution has made the basis of the Republic — the rulers of that Reich sit which has not yet officially been named 'the third'. At the window of the one house stands the new Chancellor, with sunshine in his heart, and sunshine in his gaze. At last he has 'made it', he is Number Two, and as the Old Gentleman over there is nearly eighty-six, this forty-four-year-old can hardly fail soon to be Number One. The Storm Troops march, sing, salute with raised arms and hoarse throats. The ancient giant Hindenburg stands immovable at his window. Has he any idea what he has set in motion here? Does he think at all of the meaning of this historical hour? Hardly. It is late evening. At this time he is normally already asleep. He slept even on the evening when the votes for his re-election were being counted. He is probably thinking of the stags in Rominten and of those hunting breakfasts with his comrades in Neudeck. Perhaps he is thinking of that sweltering July 3rd in '66, when he received his baptism of fire in the cornfields of Königgrätz — how long ago is that? —

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why yes, 67 years, two generations. At the assault of Chlum an Austrian bullet, fired from one of those old-fashioned muzzle-loaders, tore the Pickelhaube from his head and ploughed a little furrow in his hard skull. Perhaps he is thinking of the bivouacs in France, of the proclamation of the German Emperor in the Mirror Hall of Versailles, which he attended as the representative of his regiment, when that other giant in the Cuirassier uniform, with the strangely thin voice, read the proclamation. Does it occur to him, the President of the German Republic, that this very afternoon he has made the man over there, the 'corporal', the hysterical destitute from the Viennese Men's Home, that he has made this man Bismarck's successor? He hardly thinks of that either. For the one time General Field-Marshal this is a parade like any other; he has seen hundreds such and criticized them as an expert. Now he probably only looks to see if these brown youngsters keep step and have been well trained. But the man-in-the-street adds a new anecdote to the innumerable Hindenburg-anecdotes already in circulation. At this march past of the 25,000 the General Field-Marshal, they relate, asked his son: 'Oskar, where did we make all these Russian prisoners?'

The sudden and miraculous appearance of young Alvensleben has certainly changed the original plan; Hitler, instead of becoming Vice-Chancellor, is Chancellor. But his Cabinet is far from fulfilling the totalitarian claims of his party to power. It is really a Cabinet of the German Nationalists. The power of the Nazi Minister of the Interior, Frick, will not be great so long as German Nationalist Ministers of the Interior function in Prussia and the various States. Göring has a department which for the nonce has no field of action. Goebbels is only later to

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receive one — Aviation and Propaganda. The latter exists for the present only on paper, there are no officials and no funds. The most important post is that which Göring holds in Prussia — but he holds it only as Papen's deputy! Nevertheless, the next offensive will be launched from that very position.

Hindenburg has authorized the new Cabinet to dissolve the Reichstag, the thing he denied to Schleicher. But Hitler has had to promise his Harzburg colleagues, on his honour and publicly, that nothing shall be changed in the composition of the Cabinet even after the elections, no matter what their outcome. And the entire regime is to remain unaltered for four years. Four years interval and rest after the first step towards power? That is too much for the Storm Troops, and for Hitler too, and most of all for Göring. While the new Chancellor made speeches, very many, very coarse, very windy and very empty speeches, Göring began to act.

On February 4th, Hindenburg had promulgated a decree 'for the protection of the German people' which in effect removed the last remaining Constitutional liberties. The civic authority was placed above law and Constitution, meetings were forbidden, newspapers confiscated and suppressed, and the Reich Court was hardly able to deal with the complaints with which the Social Democrats, in particular, conducted their fight against Hitler. The Socialists were still able to record the gratifying success that they were found to be in the right at Leipzig when they were in the right. But Göring was content that the decisions of the Reich Court could no longer have the slightest effect upon his activities.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRUSSIANS SHOOT FAST...

MINOR brawls and clashes had occurred in connection with the Nazi advent to power. These were not worse than they had been for many years and the usual Communist call for a general strike met with the customary failure. Nothing stirred. The Communists accused the Social Democrats, the Social Democrats the Communists and Centre, the Centre the Left and the German Nationalists, and all hoped for a miracle. But Göring used the Communist noisiness as a pretext for energetic action. On February 17th he issued an order to the Prussian police in which he charged these to combat all attacks on the Nazi Storm Troopers and SS men ruthlessly and with all means in their power. The objective principle that the victim of an attack should be helped and his assailant be arrested was changed in favour of the new ruling, that the SA and SS men were in every case to be protected while their enemies were 'the assailants'. Under this principle somebody or other is to be executed every few months in Germany for years to come, because he threw a tankard at an SA man's head in the dim and distant past.

Göring particularly charges his men that they may make plentiful use of their firearms. In case of error, too much is better than too little: 'Police officers who use their firearms in the execution of their duties will be backed by me, irrespective of the results of their fire: but any officer who refrains from motives of false consideration must expect

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punishment.' The saying 'The Prussians do not shoot so fast' is thus set out of force. Göring's Prussians shoot very fast.

On February 22nd Göring did something further to strengthen the very unsteady foundation of power on which his Führer was erecting the Third Reich. There were not enough police, opined Göring in a new decree; auxiliary police were needed. But only 'honourable Germans, of nationalist mind' were suitable for it. Most suitable of all were the members of the uniformed associations. The auxiliary police were armed with revolver and truncheon. As pay they received three marks daily. The allies of Harzburg agreed on a scale according to which the proportion of either group in the new auxiliary police was to be determined. The Nazi Storm Troops and their black-uniformed colleagues of the Nazi SS were to supply 80 per cent, the Nationalist Stahlhelm 20 per cent of the new force; this was called 'parity'.

Good propaganda needs to have something of prophecy in it. Fortune-telling was at the time much in fashion in Germany. It was the heyday of the Hanussens, Weissenbergs and many other prophets, soothsayers and swindlers. In the greatest and most enlightened city of the Continent the newspapers of various soothsaying charlatans were distributed in hundreds of thousands. Even Goebbels needed to prophesy if he wished to keep his job. But it was easier for him. He foretold what Göring meant to do. Thus one department dovetailed into the next. It was good organization. After the advent to power Goebbels wrote in his diary: 'The Bolshevik attempt at a Revolution must first of all flare up.'

After the order-to-shoot and the arming of the Storm

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Troops a raid was made on the Communist headquarters, Karl Liebknecht House. According to the official report, touched up by Goebbels, 'many hundred hundredweights of highly treasonable material' were found.

Along with literature, precise plans for civil war and bloody revolution were allegedly found. Later it was added that incendiary material was also discovered. Göring promised the public 'shortly' documentary evidence of the Communist plans. Especially patient people may be still waiting for that report! Perhaps it will be issued together with the answer to various interpellations and lists of questions which naive foreigners have presented in Berlin in the course of the years.

On the evening of February 27th the shrill note of the fire-engines sounded through the streets of inner Berlin. Pumps raced towards the Tiergarten. It was a few minutes past nine. A quarter of an hour later all Berlin knew that the Reichstag was afire. Tens of thousands of people stood in the snow of the Tiergarten. The broad place before the Reichstag was cordoned-off. The walls were untouched but the flames were shooting through the cupolas. The interior of the great building seemed to be one sea of flame.

On the same evening appeared an announcement: the culprit, a Dutch Communist, had been arrested. Hitler, Göring and Goebbels appeared on the scene, uttered historical words, and proclaimed that everything about the arson was already clear to them. Background, motive, culprit, aim — they knew everything.

To-day the world knows all that is necessary about that night. This is not the place to write the criminal history of the Reichstag fire. The question here is the political aim which this undertaking had. Hundreds were arrested that

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same night. They were political enemies of the regime, and the lists dated from long back. The seizure of power, indeed, had long been prepared. On February 28th Hindenburg countersigned a Bill or an emergency decree — they were the same thing now — ‘for the protection of people and State’. It contained the whole juridical apparatus for a *coup d'état*, terrorism and dictatorship. Two-thirds of the German people knew or suspected what had happened, but it was enough that one-third succumbed to the new legend: that Germany had been threatened by a Bolshevist revolution and that Hitler had saved it.

CHAPTER XII

VIOLENCE, MATHEMATICS AND THEATRICALS

FIVE days remained before the election of the new Reichstag. The parties of the Left find their newspapers forbidden; all campaigning is impossible for them. Why is the Communist Party not dissolved? Why is a party, which has just been accused of the gravest crime, allowed to put forward its candidates for the Reichstag? For a very simple reason: because the Communists would otherwise have voted for the Socialists. That would yield a Left Party with 200 seats, and a legal Left party at that. So the Communists are allowed to vote, but when their eighty-one members have been returned they are either arrested or simply prevented from entering Parliament. For years the crown jurists of the Social Democratic Party had debated how Hitler would manipulate the Constitution in order to dissolve the Opposition. He needed no Constitution. He simply allowed only those into the Reichstag who suited him. Before the Reichstag fire the 'Stahlhelm', in other words the German Nationalists, who now found themselves the prisoners of Hitler, planned a redeeming coup. Düstenberg concentrated in Berlin Stahlhelmers from Silesia, Pomerania, the Mark — in all some ten thousands of men. On election night Hindenburg was to be brought to Potsdam or to the Reichswehr camp at Döberitz in order to protect him from 'disorders'. After that — well, wait and see. But the Stahlhelm Minister, Seldte, threatened by Röhm

VIOLENCE, MATHEMATICS, THEATRICALS with a mobilization of the Storm Troops, cancelled the plan. The Stahlhelmers went home and Hindenburg stayed in Berlin.

There was no Nazi majority, in spite of terrorism and propaganda. Hitler obtained rather less than 44 per cent of the votes. Together with the German Nationalists he had a bare majority of 52 per cent. The exclusion, in actual practice, of the Communists from the Reichstag made the majority substantially larger. But it was still not enough¹ for a legal alteration of the Constitution. An exchange of letters between Hitler and the Centre leader Kaas removed this difficulty. Hitler promised the Prelate considerate treatment for the Centre Party and the Catholic Church. The Centre voted for the Enablement Bill, which equipped the Cabinet for four years with plenary powers to legislate and to change the Constitution. The Cabinet — but was Hitler the Cabinet? Hugenberg, Papen, Seldte, and the other 'reactionaries' were still there. Here was still much to be done. First man to fall was the Reichsbank President, Luther. He fell softly — into the Embassy at Washington. Schacht took his place. The monopoly of the black-red-white flag also fell. The swastika was officially recognized. On March 21st Goebbels arranged a Reichstag session in Potsdam for the especial benefit of the Old Gentleman — a circus performance at the grave of Frederick the Great. The Old Gentleman thinks it to be Prussian tradition. On the next day follows the arrest of the Reich Commissioner for Emergency Works, Dr. Gereke. The first hole appears in the 'four year' cabinet and in a renowned word of honour. The Potsdam pastor who consecrated the circus of March 21st, Dr. Dibelius, is also arrested. . . .

¹ A two-thirds majority was requisite.

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On April 1st Julius Streicher organizes the spectacular boycott of the Jews. The Party, not the State, has long since ruled. There are concentration camps, pogroms, a series of political murders and acts of violence. At last 'the street' is 'free for the brown battalions' and every breach of the law is a nail in the coffin of Hugenberg, another brick in the structure of the Total State.

On May 1st capitulate the trade unions, and on May 2nd, as reward for this, they are dissolved, not by the Government, but by the Storm Troops, who appear in police lorries, take over the cash, arrest the staff, occupy the offices and set up the 'German Labour Front'.

The Social Democrat Party permitted itself one more act—a rhetorical endorsement of Hitler's foreign policy. Then it was dissolved. The Centre and the German Nationalists dissolved themselves, under the pressure of increasing Brown terrorism. On June 27th Hugenberg resigned, and on July 14th the National Socialist Party was by law proclaimed to be the only party in Germany.

The Hitler System is born, which will yet shake and convulse Europe to its foundations.

